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*The Awntyrs Off Arthure: A Study of the Production, Circulation and
Reception of Manuscripts in Fifteenth-Century England*

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This thesis is dedicated to my mum Jane and to my gran Judith. It is because of their compassion, humour and sense of adventure that it was written. Thank you for everything you gave me, especially the books.

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REFERENCE ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BL</i>	British Library
<i>CUL</i>	Cambridge University Library
<i>DIMEV</i>	<i>The DIMEV: An Open-Access, Digital Edition of the Index of Middle English Verse</i> , ed. by Linne. R. Mooney, Daniel W. Mosser, Elizabeth Solopova, Deborah Thorpe, David Hill Radcliffe and Len Hatfield, based on the <i>Index of Middle English Verse</i> (1943, supp. 1965) < www.dimev.net >
<i>IPMEP</i>	<i>Index of Printed Middle English Prose</i> , ed. by R.E. Lewis, N. F. Blake and A. S. G. Edwards (New York: Garland Press, 1985)
<i>LALME</i>	<i>An Electronic Version of A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English</i> , ed. by M. Benskin, M. Laing, V. Karaiskos and K. Williamson (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh, 2013) < http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html >
<i>Manual</i>	<i>A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500</i> , ed. by J. B. Severs, Albert E. Hartung and Peter G. Beidler (New Haven, CT: Connecticut Academy of the Arts and Sciences, 1967-2005) 11 vols
<i>MED</i>	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i> , ed. by Robert E. Lewis and others (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001), online ed., in <i>Middle English Compendium</i> , ed. by Frances McSparran and others (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) < http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/ >
<i>NLS</i>	National Library of Scotland
<i>ROLLCO</i>	Record of London's Livery Companies Online, c. 1400-1900 < http://www.londonroll.org >

- STC* *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland,
& Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640,*
ed. by Alfred W. Pollard and others, 2nd ed. (London:
Bibliographical Society, 1976)
- TNA* The National Archives, Kew London

PREFACE

The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne is a family drama: a gruesome, emotionally harrowing tale, a dead-mother's warning to her daughter; it is a prophecy of a doomed kingdom, whilst simultaneously a celebration of the splendour of King Arthur's court at the height of power; it is a battle for lands, for titles and for justice; it is a test of morals and an exploration of character. This thesis, through a sustained focus on this one, anonymous Middle English Arthurian poem, reveals a diverse audience of people engaging in late-medieval literary culture; from elite audiences, mothers and daughters, nuns and knights, to urban merchants and country gentry, men and women are all shown to be producing, reading and sharing booklets of Middle English Arthurian romance in fifteenth-century Britain. Composed in alliterative verse in *c.* 1424-25, *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* (henceforth *Awntyrs*) survives in four manuscripts, dating from *c.* 1425-80: London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a; Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91; Princeton, University Library, MS Taylor 9 (*olim.* Ireland-Blackburn MS); and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324. It does not appear to have been printed, nor to have survived in any later version until the first edition of the text was produced by John Pinkerton in 1792.¹ Yet, it seems to embody a certain generational cultural moment, or in the very least, it allows us to interpret one generation's treatment of this Arthurian romance.

The poem's manuscript survival – or lack thereof – suggests a much wider circulation of the *Awntyrs* than has previously been considered. This thesis aims to meaningfully interpret the missing corpus of the *Awntyrs* by examining the extant

¹ There seems to have been an increased interest in the text by nineteenth-century bibliophiles following this, perhaps as a result of Francis Douce acquiring his version of the text (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324), from which he produced a transcription (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 309). Further editions of the text were made by Fredric Madden in 1839, John Robson in 1842 and by F. J. Amours in 1897.

material, asking how did medieval audiences use their texts to result in so few extant copies? The methodological framework of this thesis is outlined in Chapter 1 ‘Introduction’. This chapter first situates *Awntyrs* within the broader field of scholarship in a discussion of current critical responses to the poem, particularly within the field of literature where it has received the most attention. I further examine the critical approaches of both romance and manuscript scholars to the corpus of surviving Middle English romance and the crucial problem of “the missing” medieval text. The second half of Chapter 1 then defines the critical approach of this study. A combined textual, literary, codicological and biobibliographical approach is used to investigate the *Awntyrs*, incorporating historical materialism and Actor-Network theory into the practical methods of cultural mapping to construct the literary and textual communities of the *Awntyrs*, interpreting the relation of these books to those who engaged with them.

The circulation of the poem beyond its four surviving manuscript versions is confirmed by a comparison of the four texts. This is the subject of Chapter 2 ‘The Living Text(s)’, which compares the four existing manuscripts for their treatment of the text, considers the form and layout of the poem in each of its codices and engages with the large body of textual criticism that has arisen from the production of numerous editions. This chapter also brings together the research of two of the text’s editors, Robert J. Gates (1969) and Ralph Hanna (1974), to establish the poem’s corrupted textual tradition and confirm that the stemmatic method of recension is impossible for the *Awntyrs*. This chapter is a necessary first step in thinking about the different ways in which audiences of the *Awntyrs* engaged with the text, allowing for further exploration into the heterogeneity of late-medieval reader/listeners and the potential engagement with the poem by audiences not represented by the surviving four manuscript versions.

In Chapter 3 ‘Literary Communities of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*’ I examine the fictional, implied, intended and actual audiences of the *Awntyrs*. This chapter aims to rebalance current critical positions that have frequently overlooked the female audience because of an argued lack of evidence. This chapter thus offers a feminist critical reading of the *Awntyrs* combined with an analysis of matrilineal networks through which the text was potentially transmitted, arguing that women were not only the implied audience of the poem, but active participants in its circulation, presenting women as important consumers of Middle English romance. The chapter further relates the *Awntyrs* to other important romances of the late-medieval period, including Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, arguing that the fictional audience of women reading and reciting romance had significant implications on the text’s own imagined and expected audience. The poem is then read for how it relates to late-medieval devotional culture through a consideration of its function for female audiences as an exemplum against sexual misconduct. Lastly, this chapter considers gendered social behaviours which are communicated through the poem’s fight scene, before considering the potential intended audience and likely patron of the text.

Chapter 4 ‘Textual Communities of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*’ offers a codicological and biobibliographical study of the four surviving manuscript copies of the *Awntyrs*. This chapter presents evidence to show that the *Awntyrs* circulated amongst multiple, diverse audiences, including urban merchants, civic officials and members of the gentry. I examine London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324 for their production contexts, suggesting that these two London manuscripts may represent the commercial reproduction of the *Awntyrs* text. The second half of this chapter then concentrates on Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91 (otherwise known as the Thornton manuscript) and Princeton

University Library, MS Taylor 9, both of which have previously been placed firmly within a gentry household context. I challenge this position and ask that we reconsider the way we interpret how romances such as the *Awntyrs* were produced, circulated and read, retraining our focus to look outside of the formal structure of “the book” and the traditional reading communities with which these manuscripts have come to be associated. Rather, I focus on the material form of the booklet. This form, I argue, is central to the way in which we interpret the *Awntyrs* and similar anonymous Middle English romances. This chapter thus examines the codicological details of all four manuscripts, whilst also collating existing research into the social milieu of the books’ users, to explore the question of why the *Awntyrs* survives at all.

In the Conclusion ‘A Collection of Communities’, I present the overall findings of this study: principally that the material form of the *Awntyrs* is a romance booklet, a typical material form for Middle English texts in the fifteenth century, one that made available a certain type of use (or rather multiple uses) to heterogenous audiences. This included women actively engaging with text, scribes engaged in the commercial production of text, and audiences made up of elite and middling gentry and mercantile reader/listeners, who were all engaging with this romance as a small, ephemeral cultural object, circulating and consuming it within their own social networks. This form, I argue, is also the reason for the lack of remaining copies. The conclusion brings together my study of the literary communities of the *Awntyrs* with the textual communities, to provide my own collection – or compilation – of the *Awntyrs* as can be interpreted from the surviving evidence. This collection is significant precisely because it acknowledges the missing manuscripts of the poem, as far as it is possible to do so, in order to make a case for the importance of critically engaging with the material remains of poorly surviving late-medieval Middle English texts.

Finally, in the Appendix the reader can find manuscript descriptions and collations for the central corpus of this thesis, along with a list of codices which are related to the four *Awntyrs* manuscripts. In addition, a summary of documents referred to in Chapter 4 is provided and any tables and diagrams referred to in the main text are also reproduced for reference.

CHAPTER 1 Introduction

In this chapter I engage with the existing scholarship of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, discussing the current critical positions in the field of late-medieval literature. Although no new edition of the text has been made in twenty years, and no single-volume treatment of the text has been produced since Ralph Hanna's edition in 1974, it would be an oversight to claim that this text has been neglected in scholarship.¹ Rather, its position in scholarship does not reflect its potential significance to the literary culture of the fifteenth century. The anonymity of the text means it is overshadowed by the great Arthurian work of the century: Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, written c. 1460-70 and immortalized in print by William Caxton in 1485.² Despite the remarkable survival of *Awntyrs* in four manuscript versions it has received less attention than some of the other anonymous Arthurian works of this period which, like Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, appear in just one manuscript witness. Most notable are *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.³ The editions produced of *Awntyrs* do not reflect its extraordinary survival, with the majority using the latest extant witness, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324, as their base text without critically engaging with the text's multi-manuscript survival. I provide a summary of the *Awntyrs*: its authorship, plot, form and structure in Chapter 2 'The Living Text(s)', where the focus is on issues of textual criticism. However, where these issues also relate to the literary interpretation of the *Awntyrs*, they have been included in the below literature review.

¹ *The Awntyrs Off Arthure At The Terne Wathelyn*, ed. by Ralph Hanna (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974).

² Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, London, BL, MS Additional 59678 (c. 1469); *IPMEP* 394; *Manual* 3.IX.2; *Le Morte Darthur*, printed by William Caxton (London, 1485), *STC* 801.

³ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, London, BL, MS Cotton Nero A.X (c. 1400), fols 91^r-124^v; *DIMEV* 4920, *Manual* 1.I.25; *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 91 (Yorkshire, c. 1430-1450), fols 53^r-98^v; *DIMEV* 3745; *Manual* 1.I.16. For a summary of research into these texts see: 'Selected Bibliography: The Alliterative "Morte Arthure"', *Arthuriana*, 20.2 (2010), 117-21 and Thomas Hahn and Leah Haught, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Oxford Bibliographies: British and Irish Literature*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield and others (2017) <<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846719/obo-9780199846719-0054.xml>> [accessed 1 September 2018].

1.1 Locating *The Awntyrs Off Arthure* in Scholarship

Current scholarship has been focused in three principal areas: discussions on the structure and authorship of the *Awntyrs*; historicised readings of the poem to geographically and politically locate it within a specific time of late-medieval England; and lastly, a literary discussion of the first episode's engagement with the *memento mori* culture of the fifteenth century. I first provide an overview of this research before giving a more general overview of the current fields of both romance studies and manuscript studies, the two fields that have most significantly informed the research of this thesis. In the second half of the chapter I then present the critical methods of this study, defining the key theoretical positions and research questions I intend to answer in the subsequent chapters.

The Field of Literary Studies

The authorship and structure of the *Awntyrs* has long been debated. In the introduction to his 1974 edition Ralph Hanna argued that the original poem was, in fact, two poems by two different authors: *Awntyrs A* (lines 1-338 and 703-15) and *Awntyrs B* (lines 339-702).⁴ A. C. Spearing in his 1982 essay 'Central and Displaced Sovereignty in Three Medieval Poems' challenges Hanna's reading, instead arguing for the poem's unity and structural symmetry. Spearing reads the *Awntyrs* in two episodes, as a diptych featuring an enthroned King Arthur at the very centre of the central stanza of the poem.⁵ This structure, Spearing claims, is not uncommon in Middle English literature, and he emphasises the essentially similar structure of the plots within the two episodes. Most scholars have generally accepted Spearing's argument for a unified reading of the text and have interpreted the two episodes together. Helen Phillips has offered an alternative

⁴ *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, pp. 17-24.

⁵ A. C. Spearing, 'Central and Displaced Sovereignty in Three Medieval Poems', *The Review of English Studies*, 33.131 (1982), 247-61.

interpretation of the poem based on the episode divisions presented in Princeton University Library, MS Taylor 9, emphasising the multiple possible readings of the text offered by its four manuscript witnesses, none of which ‘divides the work into the two halves recognised by modern critics’.⁶ The analysis of *Awntyrs*’ structure is still a fertile area of research, with Brett Roscoe having recently carried out a cognitive reading of the poem in which he claims that, in the form that it was read (as one poem containing two episodes), the structure was ‘both coherent and incoherent...contributing to the poem’s haunting effect.’⁷

Closely related to the discussions on the structure and authorship of *Awntyrs* are the historicised readings of the poem which attempt to more securely place the text within its original literary and political contexts. Both Andrew Breeze (1999) and Rosamund Allen (2004) associate the poem with Richard, Duke of York (d. 1460) and the Neville family, a family of immense political importance in the North of England at the time of the poem’s composition.⁸ Both are convincing in their analyses of the place names that feature in the poem; Breeze is able to persuasively identify Caerphilly and Osterlow in South Wales and Wexford and Waterford in Ireland from a combined historical and linguistic study of the lands granted to Sir Galeron at the end of the *Awntyrs*. He further demonstrates that all these locations had been associated with the Duke of York, either directly through the lands he held or from those possessed by his guardians and relatives. Likewise, Allen locates these places within the political contexts of the period. In particular, she reads the Scottish knight, Sir Galeron, as a

⁶ Helen Phillips, ‘*The Awntyrs off Arthure: Structure and Meaning: A Reassessment*’, *Arthurian Literature XII*, ed. by James P. Carley and Felicity Riddy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), 63-90 (p. 65).

⁷ Brett Roscoe, ‘Reading the Diptych: *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, Medium, and Memory’, *Arthuriana*, 24.1 (2014), 49-65 (p. 50).

⁸ Andrew Breeze, “‘The Awntyrs off Arthure’”, Caerphilly, Oysterlow, and Wexford’, *Arthuriana*, 9.4 (1999), 63-68; Rosamund Allen, ‘Place-Names in *The Awntyrs Off Arthure: Corruption, Conjecture, Coincidence*’, *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P. J. C. Field*, ed. by Bonnie Wheeler (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 181-98.

demonstration of the relaxing tensions at the Anglo-Scottish border in the 1420s. Allen goes further in her historicised reading of the poem, suggesting Joan Neville as patron of the text. Although Allen's historicised reading enters the realms of speculation, the identification of the places named in the poem, and a dating based on these places, is convincing and the location of the poem within a Cumberland context – supported by the text's dialect – is helpful. I discuss the possible connection of the *Awntyrs* poem to the Nevilles further in Chapter 3 'Literary Communities'. In a more literary reading of these place names, Andrew Walkling (2003) considers the location of Rondolette Hall, which he identifies through historical and linguistic evidence as Randolph Seat, a raised portion of land that signified the outer limits of Inglewood forest from the early-thirteenth to the late-sixteenth century. This is the place that sits at the central moment of the poem as the feast begins. Walkling suggests that a tent may have served as the 'hall' for just such a hunting feast as the one described, acting as the structural centre as well as the geographical one, Randolph Seat being physically located between Inglewood Forest, where the hunt and ghostly encounter of the first episode takes place, and Carlisle Castle, where the action of the poem concludes.⁹

The third and largest area of scholarship on *Awntyrs* is focused on the poem's engagement with fifteenth-century *memento mori* culture. This field of research is formed largely of individual essays of literary analysis on the first episode of the poem, the second episode being mostly ignored due to its conventionality, aligned generically to other Gawain romances such as *The Grene Knight*, *Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carleyle*, *Ywain and Gawain*, and *The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell*.¹⁰ Susanna Fein (1987) places the ghostly encounter within an alliterative aesthetic shared

⁹ Andrew R. Walkling, 'The Problem of "Rondolette Halle" in "The Awntyrs off Arthure"', *Studies in Philology*, 100.2 (2003), 105-22.

¹⁰ Helaine Newstead, 'Arthurian Legends', *Manual*, vol. 1, pp. 38-79 (pp. 53-54).

by a number of texts of this period, defining the trope as the ‘grotesque stranger’ and highlighting the particular didactic tendencies of Middle English alliterative poetry. Beyond observing the participation of these texts in a shared and widespread culture of death in the later Middle Ages however, Fein does not contribute much to determine a definable aesthetic, but rather observes that alliterative poetry heightens vivid description through the accretion of alliterative adjectives, particularly effective when depicting the gruesome dead.¹¹ Thorlac Turville-Petre’s 1974 essay on the shared textual, stylistic and thematic traits is much more convincing.¹² The rather unusual thirteen-line alliterative stanza found in *Awntyrs*, featuring concatenation and a ‘bob and wheel’ pattern, is shared by two other Middle English poems: *Three Dead Kings* and *Somer Sunday*. Turville-Petre makes compelling links to claim that these texts almost certainly participated in the same culture going beyond coincidence, with the poet of *Awntyrs* almost definitely having knowledge of both poems. Kenneth Rooney in *Mortality and Imagination: The Life of the Dead in Medieval English Literature* (2011) similarly makes this connection, though he confines *Three Dead Kings* to the category of exemplum and *Awntyrs* explicitly to the realm of romance, writing that ‘with the *Awntyrs* we see the most explicit and comprehensive witness of the literary figuration of the macabre idiom in a secular genre.’¹³ Rooney highlights the emphasised didacticism from the poem’s use of the ghostly encounter to express both an exemplum trope and a supernatural romance wonder, recognising in the text its deployment of the grateful dead *topos* found commonly in ghost stories and folklore of the Middle Ages.¹⁴ Rooney,

¹¹ Susanna Fein, ‘The Ghoulish and the Ghastly: A Moral Aesthetic in Middle English Alliterative Verse’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 48.1 (1987), 3-19.

¹² Thorlac Turville-Petre, “‘Summer Sunday’”, “De Tribus Regibus Mortuis”, and “The Awntyrs off Arthure”: Three Poems in the Thirteen-Line Stanza”, *The Review of English Studies*, 25.97 (1974), 1-14.

¹³ Kenneth Rooney, *Mortality and Imagination: The Life of the Dead in Medieval English Literature* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), p. 203.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 205. See also: Hans Peter Broedel, ‘Gratuitous Examples and the Grateful Dead: Appropriation and Negotiation of Traditional Narratives in Medieval Exemplary Ghost Stories’,

whilst highlighting the intertextual qualities of *Awntyrs*, positions the poem firmly as a romance, a categorisation that has proved more problematic for other scholars in their treatments of the ghostly episode. As Leah Haught (2010) observes, the text has been variably categorised as ‘romance, exemplum, *memento mori*, as an instance of the chronicle or epic tradition, a mirror for magistrates, a tragedy...and a deconstruction of chivalric ethos.’¹⁵ Haught attempts to reconcile these generic differences through a successful temporal analysis of the poem. She argues that the personification of the ghost and its prophecy represents the past’s disrupting of the present to warn Arthur’s court of its ominous future, she manages however, to avoid an analysis of the text’s second episode, declaring it ‘the seemingly peaceful present’. Both Carl Grey Martin (2010) and Jon Whitman (2013) take a similar stance, though Martin suggests that the second episode likewise confronts death through the tournament of Sirs Gawain and Galeron, who fight almost to the point of death.¹⁶ This argument is similarly problematic as it disregards the general conviviality of the second episode, with its long depictions of splendour and gaiety presenting a completely different tone to the ominous episode which precedes it. It may be more fruitful then, to consider these analyses of the ghostly episode together. Reading the poem as an analogue to *Three Dead Kings* in the diptych structure put forward by Spearing, one could read the second episode as the reflection in the *memento mori* mirror of the extravagant life the ghost so vehemently condemns, not itself a confrontation of death, but an enhanced depiction of everything earthly, as Martin states; the poem confirms and even promotes the

Translatio or the Transmission of Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Modes and Messages, ed. by Laura H. Hollengreen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 97-112.

¹⁵ Leah Haught, ‘Ghostly Mothers and Fated Fathers: Gender and Genre in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*’, *Arthuriana*, 20.1 (2010), 3-24 (p. 4).

¹⁶ Carl Grey Martin, ‘*The Awntyrs off Arthure*: An Economy of Pain’, *Modern Philology*, 108.2 (2010), 177-98; Jon Whitman, ‘Envisioning the End: History and Consciousness in Medieval English Arthurian Romance’, *Arthuriana*, 23.3 (2013), 79-103.

aristocratic ethos whilst simultaneously condemning it.¹⁷ The most prolific discussions on the *Awntyrs* have therefore centred on the inherent problem of the text's unity, whether it is unity of structure, or of genre, as outlined above. What the scholarship does make clear however, is that it is a complex and aesthetically intricate poem worthy of further study. Particularly lacking is discussion of *Awntyrs* as part of the established canon and larger field of Middle English romance. It is a text, as Krista Sue-Lo Twu has observed, 'decidedly peripheral' in both genre and scholarship.¹⁸

The Field of Romance Studies

During the fifteenth century there occurred a notable growth in the number of romances circulating in different formats among a variety of audiences to form what Nicola McDonald claims was 'England's most popular secular genre'.¹⁹ H.S. Bennett states that, of eighty-four extant Middle English romances written between 1100 and 1500, sixty-five exist only in fifteenth-century manuscripts, whereas Nicola McDonald claims a larger number of over 100 romances.²⁰ Gisela Guddat-Figge's *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances* (1976) details ninety-nine manuscripts, sixty-eight of which were produced in the fifteenth century. Quantifying romances in this way, although useful, presents conceptual problems surrounding what constitutes a 'romance' both in the medieval period as well as in contemporary constructions of the genre. This is a question dealt with at length in recent scholarship. Numerous introductory studies into medieval romance posit general definitions of the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁸ Krista Sue-Lo Twu, 'The *Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*: Reliquary for Romance', *Arthurian Literature XX*, ed. by Keith Busby and Roger Dalrymple (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 103-22 (p. 103).

¹⁹ *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. by Nicola McDonald (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 1.

²⁰ H.S. Bennett, 'The Production and Dissemination of Vernacular Manuscripts in the Fifteenth Century', *The Library*, 5th ser., 1.3 (1946), 167-78 (p. 172).

genre as: texts containing adventures with the primary function of entertainment.²¹ There have also been numerous works critically confronting the classification of the genre. All these studies agree on the protean nature of romance, and thus the essential insufficiency of any specific classification. Simon Gaunt offers perhaps the most useful explication of the fundamental problem: how can scholars critically discuss that to which limits cannot be stably applied, that which is, by its very nature, indefinable? Following Hans-Robert Jauss' reception theory, set out in the seminal *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception* (1982) in which Jauss stated that cultural productions necessarily operate on a 'preconstituted horizon of expectations...to orient the reader's (public's) understanding and to enable a qualifying reception', Gaunt suggests that the boundaries of medieval romance should be similarly read within a 'horizon of expectations'; as neither fixed nor impenetrable.²² By applying Jauss's reception theory to the problem of medieval romance the difficulties of both strict and anachronistic genre categorisations can be somewhat circumnavigated, allowing these texts to be read much in the same way that we imagine medieval audiences to be interacting with them, as evidenced by their diverse manuscript contexts and often formulaic formation of narrative.

Romance scholars equally agree upon the heterogeneous nature of Middle English romance and that, because of this, the romances' audiences had the potential to be similarly diverse. This is the basis for the most prevalent approach to examining Middle English romance texts – to consider each text individually, to then be read against other singular studies of romances in order to build up a fuller picture of the dynamic literary

²¹ *Studies in Medieval English Romances: Some New Approaches*, ed. by D. S. Brewer (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1988); *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows and Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991); *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. by Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, ed. by Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009).

²² Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 79; Simon Gaunt, 'Romance and Other Genres', *Medieval Romance*, ed. Krueger, pp. 45-59 (p. 46).

culture of which romances were but a part. Most studies of romance are thus collected editions of various scholars each considering a single text within a broader context. The benefit of such editions, containing multiple single-text studies, is that it enables the reading of texts within a wider literary context, but it does so by removing the individual works from their original material context and placing them in a new, self-consciously constructed one, giving the impression these texts were read side by side in medieval manuscripts, when in fact, the access to these texts by medieval authors and readers may have been much more limited. The primacy of context and audience is apparent in most of the studies of romance of the last decade. Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon's *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts* (2011) in particular centralises the historical and political circumstances of romance, though little attention is given to the manuscript context.²³ Similarly, Raluca Radulescu's *Romance and its Contexts in Fifteenth-Century England* (2013) aims to deliver an assessment of Middle English pious and grail romances, with a focus on their political and cultural contexts, namely genealogical anxieties of the fifteenth century. Once again, however, the context of the texts' production and transmission are relegated to providing a background for the individual romances discussed and are not discussed in terms of the wider manuscript conditions of composition or circulation.²⁴ An exception to this trend is Michael Johnston's recent monograph *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England* (2014). Johnston considers romances contained within what he terms 'provincial book production(s)' in five manuscripts: the Findern Anthology (CUL, MS Ff.1.6), the Heege MS (NLS, MS Advocates 19.3.1), the two Thornton books (Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91 and London, BL, MS Additional 31042), and the Ireland-

²³ *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. by Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011).

²⁴ Raluca L. Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts in Fifteenth-Century England: Politics, Piety and Penitence* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013).

Blackburn MS (Princeton, University Library, MS Taylor 9). Johnston determines certain romances within these productions ‘gentry romances’ and uses a literary analysis of these texts, combined with codicological, historical and socio-economic evidence, to support his claims for the formation of a gentry ideology.²⁵ Johnston’s argument is at its strongest when considering the little studied Ireland-Blackburn MS, as he considers the whole book, rather than just select texts within it. He does not, however, regard *Awntyrs* as belonging to the ‘gentry romance’ category and so dismisses it from a literary analysis. He also misses the opportunity to make some significant links regarding textual transmission, as he does not draw attention to the shared occurrences of the same texts within the different manuscripts he studies, such as is the case with *Sir Amadace*, *Sir Eglamour* and *The Awntyrs off Arthure*. Although such links could bring much to bear on his conclusions of a gentry literary culture, he consigns the evidence for ‘The Composition and Circulation of Gentry Romances’ to the appendix. Thus, the evidence of clusters of texts, or of specifically gentry textual communities, would benefit from further consideration.

The field of romance studies is also populated by more restricted approaches to the genre, either by verse form or by subgenre. Alliterative romances have received a large amount of attention; most notable is Christine Chism’s *Alliterative Revivals* (2002) which, in order to challenge the idea of a self-conscious alliterative revival, examines the origins and contexts of the production of eight alliterative poems of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, including *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, and *The Awntyrs off Arthure*.²⁶ Although Chism presents a collection of alliterative works, she organises her volume along thematic comparisons of the texts,

²⁵ Michael Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

²⁶ Christine Chism, *Alliterative Revivals* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

arguing for a shared culture in Middle English poetry rather than grouping them solely for their stylistic features. Most work on alliterative romances to date, however, concentrates on the development of the verse form rather than on the interaction of this tradition with the broader literary culture of the later medieval period.

The vibrancy of studies in Arthuriana has led to extensive treatment of the subgenre of Arthurian romance. One such study is Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carley's *Culture and The King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend* (1994), which argues that the transformative nature of the Arthurian legend contributed to its continued popularity throughout the Middle Ages. This volume is particularly useful when reflecting on the reasons for continued circulation of Arthurian romance in different textual circumstances. The collection of essays in *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P. J. C. Field* (2004) edited by Bonnie Wheeler brings together a large number of Arthurian texts with a variety of approaches. Again, in this volume manuscript studies feature as secondary to literary criticism, with little discussion of how texts were presented in their manuscripts and no discussion of their later transmission.

There has in recent years been a concerted effort to redress the position of popular Middle English romance in scholarship, with numerous volumes dedicated to redefining these texts as worthy of study, rather than as derivative of a superior French tradition, or otherwise secondary to the 'courtly' Chaucerian traditions. Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert's *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance* (2000) offers an introduction to this topic in two parts, both historical and theoretical. Ad Putter focuses on the audience of these texts, identifying the gentry and the prosperous middle classes as the consumers of these romances, without ruling out oral transmission and the performance of these texts for 'the people'. By identifying such a diverse audience for the reception of these romances, Putter argues for the value of studying each of these texts in their own right,

as the protean nature of Middle English romance only allows for a vague definition at best. Jane Gilbert focuses instead on the modern connotations of ‘popular’, drawing on sociology and cultural studies to posit three definitions which also have audience as their central focus. The collected essays which follow however, are concerned with a more traditional literary approach. For example, Margaret Robson’s assessment of *Awntyrs* offers an analysis of the various meanings of the ghost of Gaynour’s mother within the context of late medieval *memento mori* culture. Nicola McDonald in her ‘Polemical Introduction’ to *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England* (2004) follows Putter in stressing the heterogeneous audience of popular romances in later medieval England. McDonald’s edition similarly encompasses studies of single romance texts by different scholars. McDonald intentionally champions the popular romances deemed ‘under read and under studied’. The categorisation of a romance as ‘popular’ often has much to do with the circumstances of its production and transmission, for example, cheaply produced for an already established audience. McDonald stresses that these conditions of production in turn influenced the popularity of the romances:

Manuscript evidence - unmatched, in the sheer number of surviving texts, by any other secular genre - attests not only to the social and geographical diversity of romance’s medieval audience, but to the genre’s capacity to generate desire for its distinctive form of narrative and with it the pleasure of gratification: romances written in the thirteenth century continue to be copied into the fifteenth century, while the persistent demand for yet more romance guarantees the production of new texts well into the renaissance.²⁷

Although much of *Pulp Fictions* is underpinned by the work done in manuscript studies, using the conditions of production to help determine the volume’s definition of ‘popular’ as principally cheap low-quality books, the emphasis made by McDonald on the ‘sheer number of surviving texts’ along with her assertion of the continued copying of romances throughout the medieval period is somewhat misleading. The volume bases

²⁷ McDonald, *Pulp Fictions*, p. 1, p. 11.

its assertion of ‘popular’ (as in widespread) not on the popularity of each individual text, but rather on the prevalence of the romance genre as a whole, made up of numerous individual texts which survive in but few manuscripts. The ‘Polemical Introduction’ unfortunately fails to engage with the low numbers of manuscript survivals for each individual romance, with the majority of the texts surviving in fewer than two or three copies, and several surviving in just one. It thus neglects to equate the potential of high manuscript losses with the ways these romances were consumed and handled, which could add much to the volume’s argument for the definition of these romances as ‘popular’. Nevertheless, the volume states its principal aim to be a critical textual analysis of the aesthetic and cultural value of these narratives to their audiences, and it largely succeeds in providing this for several previously understudied texts.

There is therefore an essential lacuna in the field of romance studies, with few attempts to unify manuscript evidence with literary analysis. This is largely due to the methodological difficulties brought about by such a study; how can the close-text analysis of a poem originally composed in the thirteenth or fourteenth century be assimilated into the discussion of the poem’s circulation amongst a fifteenth-century audience? Regardless of the intentions of recent editions to incorporate the significant manuscript evidence into a broader study of an individual text, it is often passed over in favour of a more traditional literary and textual approach. This problem is closely associated to the problem of defining a romance. These studies which remain within the broad genre of ‘romance’ are, by these limitations, preventing an appreciation of the full literary culture in which these texts are transmitted. Most of these romances were circulated with texts of extremely diverse genres, from chronicles, to courtesy texts, hagiographies and moral exempla. The circumstances of their transmission thus challenge the modern compulsion to sort texts into genre categories that are anachronistic and potentially impose restrictions that did not necessarily concern

medieval readers. To consider the contexts of medieval romances we must do away with these constraints and view the circulation of these texts principally through the material, manuscript evidence.

An exemplary study which combines a literary, codicological and linguistic approach towards the Middle English romance *Guy of Warwick* is a PhD thesis by Alison Wiggins (2000), which takes stock of the different versions of the texts, their origin, transmission and reception, from which Wiggins is able to confirm the ‘existence of efficient networks of textual exchange which were in place in fourteenth and fifteenth-century England, effecting the movement of texts across the country between readers, scribes and editors.’²⁸ Wiggins successfully interrogates the various manuscripts, arguing for the importance of each as its own cultural artefact which says something unique of its text. Her thesis represents a recent turn in romance studies to bring together various approaches to a text, with the circulation of a text of primary importance to ascertaining its significance in a dynamic literary culture, as well as a turn towards creating editions that attempt to represent the numerous iterations of an unstable text, thus better illustrating the protean nature of medieval romance.

The Field of Manuscript Studies

Research into the culture of production and circulation of medieval romance is typically carried out by palaeographers and codicologists, with little crossover into literary criticism or more historical approaches. As such, it is only through reading romance within the broader literary culture of the later Middle Ages that its reception can be understood. Two volumes of collected essays which succeed in doing this are Margaret Connolly and Linne R. Mooney’s *Design and Distribution* (2008), drawn from the 2005 York Manuscripts Conference, *Making the Medieval Book*, and

²⁸ Alison Wiggins, ‘*Guy of Warwick: Study and Transcription*’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2000), pp. 339-40.

Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin's *The Production of Books in England 1350-1500* (2011).²⁹ Connolly and Mooney's volume places itself outside of the realm of romance to discuss the production and dissemination of medieval texts more generally. Michael G. Sargent's assessment of certain 'bestsellers' in 'What do the numbers mean? A Textual Critic's Observation on Some Patterns of Middle English Manuscript Transmission', challenges what it means for a text that survives in large quantities, both in terms of the audience's exposure to and interaction with the text, as well as what can be said about its transmission from these numbers.³⁰ Sargent suggests that the number of surviving manuscripts of any single text could be taken as a rough indication of the number originally produced, which in turn could be taken as a gauge of the demand for this text as well as the size of its possible readership. From this assertion then it could be assumed that *Awntyrs*, surviving in four copies, was four times as 'popular' with a much larger readership than the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, for example, which survives in just one copy. Yet there are textual references to the alliterative *Morte Arthure* in later works which shows its significance was not as limited as its one surviving manuscript might suggest. Likewise, Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* survives in one manuscript copy, yet the print of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* would indicate numerous copies being disseminated to a public, to meet a demand that likely already existed. Survival in just one copy may not dictate a smaller significance, but rather a different form of production, with different materials from many of the manuscripts that survive in very high numbers (the survival rate of vellum versus paper, for example) as well as a potentially different culture of reading, whereby popular texts (popular as it is defined

²⁹ *Design and Distribution of Late Medieval Manuscripts in England*, ed. by Margaret Connolly and Linne R. Mooney (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2008); *The Production of Books in England 1350-1500*, ed. by Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

³⁰ Michael G. Sargent, 'What Do the Numbers Mean? A Textual Critic's Observation on Some Patterns of Middle English Manuscript Transmission', *Design and Distribution*, eds Connolly and Mooney, pp. 204-44.

by low-quality, cheap, and commercially produced) were handled less carefully, and possibly consumed more fervently than their more expensive counterparts. Sargent likewise addresses this problem when discussing the Wycliffite Bible, a work which survives in a greater number than any other medieval text with more than 250 manuscript copies: ‘there is no way of telling whether any of the manuscripts of the Wycliffite Bible stood or lay unread or seldom-read on the most prominent bookshelf in the house.’ Thus, Sargent highlights the problem of different types of readership, as well as the different status of books. This has significant implications when considering medieval romances which, typically, are produced with low quality materials and survive in exceptionally low numbers. Sargent further comments on the problems of equating numerous copies of text with a large readership, when many texts circulated within small networks of readers – evidenced by the appearance of the same scribal hand in numerous copies, agreements in error and correction, and even evidence of several copies existing in the same library. Thus, the significance of a text is limited by how widely it was distributed. This is significant when considering *Awntyrs* which has four copies, all removed from one another geographically and textually, with noticeable gaps in its transmission suggestive of a relatively widespread dissemination.³¹ From Sargent’s problematizing of the numbers it becomes clear that a combined approach to a study of textual transmission is favourable, using textual relationships as well as biobibliographic ones to reconstruct the networks of a text’s transmission, along with evidence of a text’s circumstances of production and consumption. Sargent’s essay does not provide an answer to ‘what do the numbers mean?’ but it is nevertheless effective in outlining the approaches that may be used when attempting to reconstruct a text’s transmission and is extremely thought provoking in its discussion of the inherent problems involved in any effort to determine the significance of a medieval text.

³¹ This is further discussed in Ch. 2.1 ‘Surviving Texts’.

The work within *The Production of Books in England* is rooted firmly in the physical processes of book production, with several contributions investigating the materials: vellum, paper, ink, illumination, and bindings. It is also concerned with manuscript processes such as writing, designing, decorating and compiling. Erik Kwakkel places these processes within the commercial context of book production in his essay ‘Commercial Organization and Economic Innovation’, which focuses on the growing markets for books, their commercial contexts, and the role of the elusive stationer in the fifteenth century.³² Of essays contained in this volume, Simon Horobin’s ‘Mapping the Words’ is of most significance to this thesis as it offers a useful discussion on the mapping of textual transmission with the use of *LALME*’s linguistic analysis.³³ Horobin makes the important observation that alliterative texts are more constrained in their forms; in order to keep the alliteration and rhyme scheme, scribes of alliterative texts often had to maintain unfamiliar forms, which bears consideration for the four *Awntyrs* texts, which, though copied in four different dialects, remained relatively stable, frequently agreeing in error. He also highlights that *LALME* locates manuscripts by their linguistic similarity to other manuscripts, thus making it easier to build a network of associated manuscripts and posit textual communities. He states that, despite the inevitable loss of many copies of works, ‘as more maps of this kind are constructed, so we shall get a much more detailed picture of regional literary communities and their textual cultures.’³⁴

Andrew Taylor in ‘Authors, Scribes, Patrons and Books’ likewise asserts that the circulation patterns of medieval texts, although problematic due to the low survival rate of manuscripts, needs to be investigated further. Taylor’s essay forms part of the

³² Erik Kwakkel, ‘Commercial Organization and Economic Innovation’, *The Production of Books*, eds Gillespie and Wakelin, pp. 173-91.

³³ Simon Horobin, ‘Mapping the Words’, *Production of Books*, eds Gillespie and Wakelin, pp. 59-78.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68

volume *The Idea of the Vernacular* (1999) which addresses the reception and social dimension of vernacular texts. Taylor, following Ralph Hanna, argues that the use of booklets in manuscript production allowed for a flexible and more dynamic literary culture, and that such productions ‘circulated along lines of patronage, friendship, or kinship that it in turn reinforced.’ Taylor suggests that the *Awntyrs* booklet Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324 may have formed part of a stationer’s regular stock, using this fragment as evidence for a book trade with an already established audience in a market that enabled the conditions for the printed book trade to develop. One further observation made by Taylor is that texts frequently occur together in different manuscript productions.³⁵ These clusters of texts are significant for the consideration of how texts were transmitted and read in the later Middle Ages.

All these works are indebted to the research of codicologist Ralph Hanna, whose work underpins many of the significant studies on the production and transmission of texts in late medieval England. Particularly influential has been his essay on the use of booklets (or fascicles) in the production of medieval manuscripts.³⁶ Expanding on the definition of a booklet developed by P. R. Robinson, Hanna tackles difficult conceptual problems regarding the distinction between texts produced in commercial circumstances and those of more amateur production. He problematizes the definition of the booklet in order to enable scholars to identify the many diverse ways in which texts in the later Middle Ages were produced. Hanna concludes that the evidence for booklet production has ‘important implications for literary history, insofar as it suggests the independent circulation of texts in very small chunks. This information, when coupled with the findings of such studies as dialectology, may allow for quite precise mappings of the

³⁵ Andrew Taylor, ‘Authors, Scribes, Patrons and Books’, *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory 1280-1520*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and others (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), pp. 353-65, p. 358, p. 364, and p. 359.

³⁶ Ralph Hanna, *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 21-34.

transmission of medieval literary works and give depth to our sense of the perforce-localized literary culture of the later Middle Ages.³⁷ Considering that the *Awntyrs* appears to have been circulated in this form, yet was produced in very different contexts, Hanna's definitions will be extremely useful to this thesis. Hanna's often multidisciplinary approach to manuscript studies is exemplified further in his more recent publication *London Literature, 1300-1380* (2005) in which he challenges not only the idea of 'The History of English Literature', but also the assumption of scholars that London was a hub of literary activity, putting forward instead an argument for London in the fourteenth century to be considered on the one hand a provincial place of book production, much like many others operating in this period in England, but also as a locale for the import and export of literature to other textual communities. Hanna concludes by suggesting that at the end of the fourteenth century three revolutions converged in London and in wider literary culture: the appearance of an 'English National Tradition', such as Chaucerian literature; the new dialect of London English Type III (Chaucerian English) supplanting that of the previous more localized Type II; and the appearance of Secretary hand in London books.³⁸ These observations have important implications for the transmission of *Awntyrs*, with both the earliest and latest extant manuscripts being produced in London.

The London context directly following the period discussed by Hanna is examined in Linne R. Mooney and Estelle Stubbs' book *Scribes and the City: London Guildhall Clerks and the Dissemination of Middle English Literature, 1375-1525* (2013).³⁹ This book identifies several scribes of Middle English romance as clerks working within the

³⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

³⁸ Ralph Hanna, *London Literature, 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 305.

³⁹ Linne R. Mooney and Estelle Stubbs, *Scribes and the City: London Guildhall Clerks and the Dissemination of Middle English Literature, 1375-1425* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2013).

City of London Guildhall in the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries. They argue that this social network of important men bound up with government service were working together to actively promote vernacular literature. Included in this group is the scribe of the earliest manuscript of *Awntyrs*, who they identify as Richard Osbarn, clerk of the chamber for the City of London from 1400-37. This scribe's hand can be found in three literary manuscripts of the early-fifteenth century: London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a; San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, MS 114; and the first half of London, BL, MS Harley 3943. More recently, Lawrence Warner has challenged the evidence presented by Mooney and Stubbs. In *Chaucer's Scribes: London Textual Production, 1384–1432* (2018) Warner argues that the scribe of these manuscripts is most likely to have been a junior clerk, not Osbarn, and he expands the body of work attributed to this scribe. Warner goes further too, deconstructing the central argument of *Scribes and the City* to argue that of the five scribes Mooney and Stubbs identify as Guildhall clerks, Richard Frampton is the only one with any known direct connection with that institution at all (and employed most likely on a freelance basis) 'the rest being instead associated with the individual livery companies'.⁴⁰ Of the nearly twenty surviving literary manuscripts that Mooney and Stubbs claim were produced by Guildhall clerks while in that capacity, Warner claims that only one 'stands up to scrutiny, and might be dated to the years after its scribe had departed that institution'.⁴¹ The picture that Warner builds is of a more diverse and more diffuse literary culture, with junior clerks and members of various livery companies working as copyists of Middle English literature across multiple sites in London. The scribe of the *Awntyrs* that produces London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a, he claims 'was responsible for perhaps the greatest, in both quality and quantity, recording and preservation of lives

⁴⁰ Lawrence Warner, *Chaucer's Scribes: London Textual Production, 1384–1432* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 97 and p. 107.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

and beliefs of the men and women of medieval England and beyond'.⁴² The fact that the *Awntyrs* is included in this corpus is significant, and something I will explore in later chapters.

The field of manuscript studies is clearly a fertile one, yet there is still a need for research on textual networks to be expanded. There is an evident lacuna in the scholarship of the popular romances (already discussed) in their manuscript contexts, with a particular lack of engagement with Arthurian material, in spite of the endurance of the Arthurian legends in medieval culture. There is likewise a gap which separates the current work in this area by literary scholars from that being done by scholars of book history. Within the field of Arthurian romance two texts are dominant: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. Works on these two texts are prolific and are often regarded as entirely representative of the two different literary traditions considered to be operating simultaneously in late-medieval England: the first, an anonymous insular alliterative text written in the fourteenth century, and the second a compendium of the extant French and English Arthurian legends written in prose towards the end of the fifteenth century. Neither of these texts is particularly useful in discussing the circulation of Middle English Arthurian romances during this period as both survive in a single manuscript version, in manuscripts containing the works of a single author, produced at either ends of the century. Thomas H. Crofts' *Malory's Contemporary Audience* (2006) does, however, provide an insightful analysis of the culture of production surrounding *Le Morte Darthur*, questioning the identity of its author and the nature of his production, using evidence of texts that he may have had access to through the reconstruction of social networks and analyses of library catalogues of Malory's potential associates and patrons. Crofts provokes interesting

⁴² Ibid., p. 77.

questions surrounding the literary culture that enabled such a text as *Le Morte Darthur* to be written, considering French composite texts and other manuscripts containing abridged romances that could have potentially served as a source for the *Morte*, thereby challenging the perception of Malory as innovator that previous scholars have perpetuated. Crofts' assessment assumes that not only did Malory have at least an awareness of, if not access to, a large corpus of Arthurian material, but also that Malory's text assumes the same level of knowledge from his audience, making frequent textual references to reinforce his narrative. The social reading of the *Morte* that Crofts provides is therefore useful in thinking about the function and audience of these texts.⁴³ More research needs to be done on the marginalised English romances which belong to this corpus of Arthurian literature and on the literary culture in which both Malory and his readers actively participated.

Recent manuscript studies have favoured a "whole book" approach, outlined by Derek Pearsall in 'The Whole Book: Late Medieval English Manuscript Miscellanies and their Modern Interpreters', which challenges the definition of anthologies or sections within manuscripts that scholars have determined on generic and anachronistic principles.⁴⁴ Pearsall observes that the final compilation of manuscripts does not always reflect the modes or formats in which texts circulated; the compiler may receive an exemplar with multiple texts but nevertheless decide to position them in separate 'anthologies' of the books. There have been several book-length studies into individual romance manuscripts and collectors of romance, the most famous compiler perhaps being Robert Thornton who is responsible for Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91 and London, BL, MS Additional 31042, both of which contain romances, some of which are

⁴³ Thomas H. Crofts, *Malory's Contemporary Audience: The Social Reading of Romance in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006).

⁴⁴ Derek Pearsall, 'The Whole Book: Late Medieval English Manuscript Miscellanies and their Modern Interpreters', *Imagining the Book*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 17-29 (p. 23).

unique survivals. John J. Thompson's in-depth treatment of the London Thornton MS (1987) speaks at length to the compiling activities of the gentry landowner, based on the codicological evidence and the ordering and evident anthologizing of texts by Thornton.⁴⁵ Similarly, Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston's recently published *Robert Thornton and His Books* (2014) brings together the work of scholars of Thornton in order to develop a composite picture of the scribe and his codices.⁴⁶ What this type of study provides is a portrait of an individual within a highly-personalized context of textual production, with an important appreciation of the whole book(s) and the intentional interaction of its contents. Although important comparisons can be drawn between Thornton's compilation habits and other compilers of fifteenth-century miscellanies, the implications for a wider manuscript culture are limited, as less can be said about his position outside of his locale. For this reason, more studies concentrating on the whole book need to be carried out in order to gain a fuller picture of manuscript compiling practices.

The social aspects of manuscript transmission have been discussed most skilfully in Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson's collection of essays *Imagining the Book* (2005), which provides a theoretical and methodological framework for studies of English vernacular manuscripts in the pre-print era.⁴⁷ Kelly and Thompson identify the book as a vehicle of meaning, formed of the social relationships between readers, writers, copyists, redactors, disseminators and commentators. They offer a model of imagining the book not as a structure, which has inferences of unity and completion, but rather as a process, of books being 'at the same time a material object and cultural phenomenon.'

They argue that research must 'move from the matter of codicological assessment, to

⁴⁵ John J. Thompson, *Robert Thornton and The London Thornton Manuscript: British Library, MS Additional 31042* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987).

⁴⁶ *Robert Thornton and His Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts*, ed. by Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2014).

⁴⁷ *Imagining the Book*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).

the cultures and societies within which, and for which, books were made, it must marry a consideration of material culture with a keener awareness of rhetorical, poetic, and literary strategies derived from the materiality of books and their production.’⁴⁸ The work of Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson has developed largely out of the work of Ralph Hanna, who has articulated that ‘the ultimate question manuscript studies needs to face, [is] the cultural move’, and that the ultimate goal is the ‘contribution to large-scale cultural history’.⁴⁹ This thesis, through an analysis of the four surviving manuscripts of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, would like to contribute to this large-scale cultural history.

The *Awntyrs* offers a unique opportunity to investigate late-medieval literary culture. Many Middle English romances originate in the fourteenth or even thirteenth century yet survive in the majority in small numbers of manuscripts produced in the fifteenth century. Whether this is because of a change in the way that texts were produced, the volumes which they were produced in, or rather is more telling of the ways in which they were used, vernacular manuscripts in the fifteenth century have been problematic, with scholars at times finding it difficult to reconcile material evidence with textual analysis when the remaining evidence is at such a remove from the moment of the text’s original composition. The composition of *Awntyrs*, however, can be confidently dated to the 1420s and the romance survives in four fifteenth-century manuscripts: London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a; Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91; Princeton, University Library, MS Taylor 9 (*olim.* Ireland-Blackburn MS); and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324. The text was therefore reproduced and in circulation almost immediately after its initial composition. The extraordinary survival

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁹ Ralph Hanna, ‘Middle English Manuscripts and the Study of Literature’, *New Medieval Literatures*, 4 (2001), 243-64 (p. 248, p. 256).

of the text in multiple manuscripts, each with different production circumstances, and its survival in miscellaneous books alongside texts of diverse genres, provides an opportunity to build a transmission model for the *Awntyrs*. A study of the social and literary networks belonging to each codex can further determine the principal audiences and textual communities of the *Awntyrs* and its related material. This approach combines the “single text” approach prevalent in romance literary studies with the “whole book” approach of manuscript studies, performing a social reading that brings meaning to textual analysis through a study of the poem’s specific material situations.

1.2 Critical Methods

Central to the critical methods of this thesis is the observation made by Ralph Hanna (2004) that there is ‘no such thing as a “literary history of late medieval England”’.⁵⁰ This statement builds on earlier ideas expressed by Hanna in *Pursuing History* (1996), principally that ‘the conditions of vernacular book production should inherently destabilize any “historicist” preconceptions about Middle English literature’. Hanna further argues that when taking the material conditions into account, no general ‘literary public’ can exist, only ‘a range or spectrum of literary communities’.⁵¹ This thesis aims to respond to this by constructing the literary communities of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, an Arthurian romance composed and circulating in fifteenth-century England. It will adopt the conceptual framework of the constellation developed by Arthur Bahr (2013) and will incorporate the methods and approaches of cultural mapping devised by Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson in their 2005 *Imagining Histories* Project (2005; 2008) with the network theory of Bruno Latour (2013).⁵² The

⁵⁰ Ralph Hanna, ‘Middle English Books and Middle English Literary History’, *Modern Philology*, 2.102 (2004), 157-78 (p. 174).

⁵¹ Hanna, *Pursuing History*, p. 9.

⁵² Arthur Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Walter Benjamin, ‘On the Concept of History’,

aim of this thesis is to bring together the literary and material evidence for the *Awntyrs*, overcoming the vestigial conditions of the poem's survival to contribute to an understanding of the literary culture of late-medieval England that is more complex than the generalised definition which Hanna rightly rejects, one that is defined by interrelated, complex networks of people and texts, connected through a shared engagement with vernacular literature.

Terminology

Before discussing the methodological framework of this study, it is first necessary to identify and define the terms this framework is built upon, as well as the boundaries which delimit it. *Textual community* was first defined by Brian Stock in *The Implications of Literacy* (1983):

One potential approach is to investigate the relationships between individuals in groups that are actually using texts for literary or social purposes, while at the same time paying close attention to the historical context of their actions as well as to consequences. The point of departure for this method is Weber's notion of subjectively meaningful social action, to which one adds a distinction between intersubjectivity, a feature of minds, and intertextuality, an aspect of writings. What results is the analysis of what I call "textual communities", which are microsocieties organized around the common understanding of a script.⁵³

This is further developed by Stock in his later work *Listening for the Text* (1990) and adopted by Felicity Riddy (1991) for the purpose of studying late-medieval textual communities. Riddy defines it as:

the community of people who read the same text, who are brought together simply by the act of reading (or hearing); ... a textual community may be a social community, but it is also the community of

Selected Writings, trans. by Edmund Jephcott, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, 4 vols (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1999), 4, pp. 389-400; Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson, 'Imagined Histories of the Book: Current Paradigms and Future Directions', *Imagining the Book*, eds Kelly and Thompson, pp. 1-14; John J. Thompson, 'The Middle English Prose *Brut* and the Possibilities of Cultural Mapping', *Design and Distribution*, eds Connolly and Mooney, pp. 245-60; Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry Into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, trans. by Catherine Porter (London: Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁵³ Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 23.

those who do not know one another but who read the same book, a community of the living and the dead.⁵⁴

Riddy's definition, like Stock's, rests on the materiality of the text; crucially, the community is formed from those who engage with the *same object*. Ralph Hanna refers to this same concept as 'material literary communities'.⁵⁵ These readers may be part of the same immediate social network, or may be separated by time and place, but it is nevertheless centred on the specific physical object: textual community is predicated on the text itself, or as Stock defines it, the 'same externalized object'.⁵⁶ This differs from a literary community. The term *literary community* is both more interpretative and inclusive, it allows for a community of readers to exist beyond the limitations of the physical text. A literary community is formed by a text's implied audience and wider literary concerns, allowing therefore for the potential wider literary and cultural significance of a text not necessarily represented in its material survival. This is especially important when considering the fragmented textual record of the late-medieval period more generally, and Middle English romance more specifically. Though a literary community is also, by definition, more speculative, both textual and literary communities can contain within them sub-cultures or sub-communities, delineated by boundaries such as language, geography, gender, calling and class.⁵⁷

Whereas Riddy has used the terms *book* and *text* interchangeably, it is for the purposes of this study worth distinguishing one from the other. I will be using *text* in the sense of a uniquely treated, distinct piece of writing. There are therefore four texts of *Awntyrs*, meaning there are four separate versions of the same poem, each of which exist as their own text and thus form their own equally separate textual communities.

⁵⁴ Felicity Riddy, 'Reading for England: Arthurian Literature and National Consciousness', *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society*, 43 (1991), 314-32 (p. 317).

⁵⁵ Hanna, *Pursuing History*, p. 9.

⁵⁶ Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On The Uses of The Past*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 20.

⁵⁷ Riddy, 'Reading for England', p. 315.

Yet each of these texts appears within a book (or codex), which itself is made up of separate texts or groups of texts. Although these separate texts necessarily come to exist within the same textual communities when compiled into a codex, they each also have the potential to have their own separate and distinct textual communities, formed prior to this act of compilation. This definition challenges the accepted conceptualisation of the book as a static and formalised structure. As Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson have argued, ‘structure infers unity, wholeness, or completion - notions that exclude the activities of readers and users’.⁵⁸ Kelly and Thompson prefer to consider the book not as a static material object, but rather ‘as a site of diverse activities and concerns’, as a *process* rather than as a formalised structure, one that reflects the on-going cultural demands of its makers, readers and owners, thereby recognising the book as both a material object and cultural phenomenon.⁵⁹ It is this conceptualisation of the book as *process* that I will be using in this thesis, as it allows for multiple production and reception narratives to co-exist within the same cultural object.

I employ in this thesis several terms to discuss the diverse activities and concerns of the various makers, readers and owners of medieval manuscripts. The term *commercial* is used to mean: a copy that has been commissioned by a patron from a scribe who is presumably fulfilling the commission for recompense of some kind; a copy that might have been speculatively produced by a scribe for potential sale to a market audience; and a copy that may have been produced as an exemplar by a scribe building a portfolio of marketable texts. Thus, the term encompasses a range of activities, from a haphazard manuscript copied by an individual scribe in an informal setting to a more formalized and organised arrangement, where the copying of literary texts may be the scribe’s main profession, perhaps in a workshop setting or in collaboration with other scribes,

⁵⁸ Kelly and Thompson, ‘Imagined Histories’, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

booksellers and individuals involved in the book trade. Several scholars have discussed what commercial scribal activity looks like in relation to the production of Middle English literature in the fifteenth century.⁶⁰ Most recently, Ryan Perry contributes to these discussions by comparing the production of *pecia* manuscripts to innovative ‘professional’ scribal productions of the Middle English prose *Brut*.⁶¹ It is evident, as Perry argues, that the identification of commercial scribes and commercially produced manuscripts are predicated on the examination of the material details, the scribes’ method ‘leaving material evidence within the books they produced’.⁶² The term *exemplar*, when used in a codicological context, is defined as the physical copy of a text used to reproduce that same text and can include the reproduction of stylistic and dialectal features. The term *household* relates to the *space in which a text is used* and so can incorporate multiple types of activities, including being a site for both production and reception. The terms *commercial* and *household* are not therefore mutually exclusive, and indeed a text can be both a commercial and a household object. For example, a text could be produced commercially and purchased for use in a household. Indeed, the household as a space is permeable, something I explore and define further in later chapters. These terms are not intended to limit how medieval manuscripts are defined but intended as tools to help navigate different kinds of use, as interrogating use

⁶⁰ See: A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, ‘The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century,’ *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays presented to N. R. Ker.*, ed. by M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson (London: Scholar Press, 1978), pp. 163-210; L. R. Mooney and L. M. Matheson, ‘The Beryn Scribe and his Texts: Evidence for Multiple-Copy Production of Manuscripts in Fifteenth-Century England,’ *The Library*, 7th ser., 4.4 (2003), 347-70; D. M. Mosser and L. R. Mooney, ‘More Manuscripts by the Beryn Scribe and His Cohort,’ *Chaucer Review*, 49.1 (2014), 39-76; Ryan Perry, ‘Making Histories: Locating the Belfast Fragment of the Middle English Prose *Brut*,’ *Digital Philology*, 3.2 (2014), 240–56.

⁶¹ Ryan Perry, ‘The Sum of the Book: Structural Codicology and Medieval Manuscript Culture’, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval British Manuscripts*, ed. by Orietta Da Rold and Elaine Treharne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 106-26.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

can disrupt the ways medieval manuscripts are conceptualised as static, fixed and categorizable objects.

Key to this will be the *booklet* and its prevalent use in late-medieval manuscript production. A *booklet* is a textual unit consisting of a group of leaves forming at least one quire and presenting an intentionally materially distinct text or group of texts. The booklet as a codicological form is first defined by P. R. Robinson (1980) who provides ten codicological features to help establish its existence within a codex. Hanna (1996, 2004) further expands upon and problematizes Robinson's definition, contributing three more identifiers that take into account literary, textual and codicological evidence.⁶³ Hanna considers the booklet principally from two perspectives: first as an object sold by a stationer or bookseller, a form allowing both 'private citizens' and those involved in the book trade to purchase multiple booklets of texts to form their own bespoke, composite books; and second as an object intentionally produced to be joined with other booklets, a form preferred by those engaged in the copying process which allowed commercial scribes and booksellers to have certain popular texts 'on spec' without the investment of copying an entire codex. This can be extended further to include the possibility of multiple commercial scribes producing multiple texts simultaneously for the same commission, facilitating a higher rate of both textual transmission and commercial production. Although successful in providing a more flexible model of late-medieval book production, Hanna's interpretation of the booklet, both in its function and its form, can also be extended beyond the commercial manuscript production contexts he outlines: for example, the booklet form was also employed by non-commercial copyists, evidenced by the manuscripts of gentleman-scribe Robert Thornton.

⁶³ P. R. Robinson, 'The "Booklet": A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts', *Codicologica*, 3 (1980), 46-69; Ralph Hanna, 'Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations', *Studies in Bibliography*, 39 (1986), 100-11; Hanna, *Pursuing History*, pp. 21-34.

The booklet challenges not only the way we consider manuscript production and transmission, but also reception. That textual units may have circulated independently is recognised to some extent by Hanna, who uses the term *textual nodes* to signify groups of texts or booklets in common circulation within local communities. However, Hanna imagines these exclusively as serving to enable ‘the construction of individualistic miscellanies’, rather than considering that the booklet may have in fact been consumed in this form, as a booklet, only to be compiled into a larger collection at a later date for the sake of preservation.⁶⁴ By further extending our consideration of the booklet to incorporate reception contexts, the booklet becomes a literary form in its own right and the idea of “the book” is further challenged, confronted with the possibility that the medieval audience had a more flexible concept of what materially constituted “a book” than the majority of medieval manuscript scholars have so far considered. Joel Freddell (2006) has addressed this problem, arguing that, in spite of extensive interest in booklets and the construction of composite books, ‘there has not been much interest in a literary culture of pamphlet-sized poetry’.⁶⁵ Freddell considers this with regards to the poetry of John Lydgate and advances the use of the term “pamphlet” or “quire” to refer to small books of one or two quires circulating independently, arguing that while “booklet” is not a medieval term, both “pamphlet” and “quire” were in consistent use by authors, compilers and collectors during the late-medieval period.⁶⁶ For the purposes of this study, however, I will continue to use the more widely adopted term *booklet* when discussing both its physical and literary form.

⁶⁴ Hanna, ‘Middle English Books’, p. 167; see also, Hanna, ‘Booklets’.

⁶⁵ Joel Freddell, ““Go litel quaier”: Lydgate’s Pamphlet Poetry’, *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 9 (2006), 51-73 (p. 53).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

The Book as Compilation

The work of Alexandra Gillespie (2011) is particularly helpful to the interpretation of both the book and the booklet as a literary form. Gillespie argues that in modern critical theory, other literary forms are not expected to be ‘locked’ into a singular meaning, and that as the book (and thus also booklet) are not just material objects, but also literary forms, ‘creative acts’ which are ‘fluid and shifting’, it follows that ‘a book is not bound to be meaningful in some fixed way’.⁶⁷ Thus, the distinction made by contemporary scholars between the material form of “the book” and “the booklet” may be at odds with the way a medieval readership conceptualised these literary forms, much in the same way that medieval audiences did not conceptualise literary genre by the same rigid categorisations imposed by later scholars. This is particularly pertinent when considering the historical perspective from which we interpret the book, determined to a large extent by our own experiences with this material object. Any attempt by historians to deconstruct the formalist interpretations of the book must begin with a confrontation of our own experiences of the book in the post-print era, now complicated even further by the digital era, comparisons to which often confront the traditional structure of the book.

Arthur Bahr’s *Fragments and Assemblages* (2013) adopts the historical materialism of Walter Benjamin (1940) to help reconcile this issue. Benjamin’s ‘On the Concept of Time’ argues that the historical materialist must do away with the ‘eternal time’ of historicism, in which the historian views the past as a linear progression of events. In the historicist ‘history of book’, the medieval manuscript would be considered the form from which the printed book evolved, rather than appreciated for its own cultural and historical limits. Benjamin argues that rather than this ‘eternal’ image

⁶⁷ Alexandra Gillespie, ‘Medieval Books, Their Booklets, and Booklet Theory’, *English Manuscript Studies*, 16 (2011), 1-29 (p. 24).

of the past, history must be a unique ‘experience with the past’, defined by our own present perspective.⁶⁸ The past can never therefore be a reconstruction, but must, by definition of its engagement with the present, exist as a new construction. It is from this concept of history that Benjamin develops the analogy of the constellation. The constellation, as Bahr explains, is a helpful metaphor precisely because ‘constellations do not exist objectively or transhistorically. Rather, they represent culturally inflected ways of interpreting how multiple members of a larger group of objects interrelate.’⁶⁹ Bahr adopts this conceptual framework to develop an aestheticism for the late-medieval manuscript, arguing that the selection and arrangement of texts in manuscripts should be ‘read compilationally’. This involves trying to reconcile the material form of the book with its literary form and significance. Bahr’s ‘compilational’ method is grounded in an object’s historical specificity but allows for ‘meaningfully interpretable’ anachronism. Bahr’s argument rests on the knowledge that, although we cannot reconstruct the full intention behind a medieval compilation, by employing Benjamin’s concept of the constellation, we can interpret the order of a compilation as it now survives as having literary value and ‘metaphorical potentialities’. Arthur Bahr’s study engages with many problematic aspects of uniting manuscript and literary studies of the late-medieval period.

In redefining the late-medieval compilation, Bahr aims to contribute to how modern scholars interpret ‘disparate texts, assembled and juxtaposed, function as a whole’. Bahr defines the compilation as ‘the assemblage of multiple discrete works into a larger structure’ which is at ‘a tangible “standstill”’. Bahr further argues, however, that the compilation is a collection of ‘multiple, intersecting temporalities created by the

⁶⁸ Benjamin, ‘Concept of History’, p. 396.

⁶⁹ Bahr, p. 14.

histories of a compilation's authors, scribes, patrons, and later handlers.'⁷⁰ This is where Bahr's definition of the compilation would benefit from Kelly and Thompson's conceptualisation of the book as *process*, rather than *structure*. For any study of medieval textual transmission, it is essential to view these texts – or cultural objects – not as formal structures, since the modes of production, circulation and consumption for these objects were not formalised, at least not until the very end of the fifteenth century. With a more flexible definition of the book – as both material and literary form – an equally flexible recognition of textual transmission must accompany it. This becomes even more important when the fragmentary nature of late-medieval vernacular literature is taken into account. Within Bahr's *Fragments and Assemblages*, Bahr raises the question of how can we meaningfully interpret the surviving forms of an object, when both its originating intentions and original physical shape has been lost, asking '[h]ow can we make fragments speak with a voice that is intelligible, if not unified?'⁷¹ Bahr recognises that the interrogation of the fragmentary survivals of later-medieval manuscripts is crucial because it further disrupts linear historicism. In keeping with the aims of his study, Bahr thus focuses on fragmentation within existing compilations, stating that absences from the material record are less securely open to interpretation since 'arguments from absence are inherently difficult to substantiate.'⁷² However, as Neil Cartlidge in *Imagining the Book* (2005) states:

in stressing the physical immediacy of the books that survive there is perhaps a risk of exaggerating their individuality and distinctiveness within their original context. Only by relating the extant books to those that are no longer extant is it possible to construct a history even of the existing materials that is in any sense complete[.]⁷³

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 10-11, p. 13.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷² Ibid., p. 43.

⁷³ Neil Cartlidge, 'Imagining X: A Lost Early Vernacular Miscellany', *Imagining the Book*, eds Kelly and Thompson, pp. 31-44 (p. 31).

Although Bahr is arguing against the possibility of a history that is ‘in any sense complete’, the interpretation of the missing corpus remains crucial for what it can reveal about the significance of the extant material. The innovative theoretical framework of *Fragments and Assemblages* can therefore be developed to more fully confront and interpret the missing material of late-medieval literary culture. This can be achieved by interweaving Bahr’s theory with the methodological approach of cultural mapping.

Cultural Mapping

Cultural mapping is a methodological framework largely influenced by Ralph Hanna’s call for manuscript studies to make the ‘cultural move’, first developed by the *Imagining Histories* Project at Queen’s University, Belfast in 2005. The project involved an investigation of all the surviving manuscripts and fragments of the Middle English Prose *Brut*. In designing the method, Thompson and Kelly outlined the following research questions:

- How can modern scholars estimate the cultural capital enjoyed by the texts and manuscripts belonging to ‘the English *Brut* tradition’, a phenomenon that manifested itself in these islands in the late medieval and early modern period?
- How was ‘the English *Brut* tradition’ interpreted and promoted outside England, particularly in border areas where linguistic, literary and historiographical cross fertilization adds an extra dimension to the critical issues surrounding the undoubted attractions of such a potentially divisive reading of British history?
- Can an understanding of the ‘cultural work’ undertaken by the *Brut* and related historiographical writings be achieved without resorting to the traditional apparatus of philological investigation?
- What would a study of the extant manuscript corpus of the *Brut* which considered the circulation and use of each manuscript for their reading communities look like?

The approach utilises numerous disciplinary tools to achieve its outcomes, combining a material, codicological investigation, with textual, literary and linguistic studies.

Thompson (2008) further explains the method, arguing that cultural mapping enables scholars to:

emphasize the possibilities of geographical, social and textual mobility, transition and exchange - features that permit a conception of cultural practice where acts of writing, reading and book production are conceptualized alongside many other material practices and where notions of the apparent 'popularity' of large-corpus texts based on the number of surviving manuscripts immediately becomes part of a much larger and more problematic set of critical issues related to the evidence for production, reading and reception in a manuscript culture.⁷⁴

This approach, which is itself an amalgamation of various scholarly approaches, facilitates the study of a text with an uncertain rate of survival, whose popularity is not necessarily reflected in the number of copies that survive, but rather in *how* they survived. Its cross-disciplinary methods allow for the construction of lateral, non-linear circulation patterns. The method was developed for a large corpus of texts, with many variants in both form and content. The Middle English prose *Brut* was an adaptable text, found in many different contexts, and this method recognises both the heterogeneity of these contexts and the many differing functions of the text for its diverse audiences. This is the strength of the cultural mapping methodology.⁷⁵ The *Awntyrs* however, presents the opposite problem: a text that is largely stable, with four versions containing in the most part the same material, and a very small surviving corpus of manuscripts (small when compared to texts such as the prose *Brut* and the large number of surviving devotional vernacular literature). It is nevertheless a remarkably large corpus for a Middle English Arthurian romance, the majority of which survive in one manuscript copy. It further presents notable gaps in the poem's transmission. A textual study demonstrates that none of the four extant versions have been copied from another, with

⁷⁴ Thompson, 'The Middle English Prose *Brut* and the Possibilities of Cultural Mapping', p. 246.

⁷⁵ It is important to note, however, that the Middle English Prose *Brut*, as a very long text, means that it was never likely to be found in the more ephemeral form of the 'booklet' but would almost always, or at least very regularly, have received a permanent binding.

each presenting a different dialectal region and three different places of production, spanning fifty years of the fifteenth century.⁷⁶ This evidence suggests serious gaps in its transmission not only from an authorial copy – something I will not be attempting to reconstruct – but also in its circulation as a poem in its current form within diverse literary and textual communities. Cultural mapping enables me to consider this relatively small corpus of Arthurian romance within a wider cultural context, confronting and overcoming the vestigial manuscript condition by building layers of methodological inquiry to substantiate an argument of absence. Central to this is the construction of the historical networks of *Awntyrs*.

Texts and Networks

Books, as cultural objects, circulate along lines of personal connection: friends borrow books from friends, family give books to family, scribes lend exemplars to other scribes, and thus a network of social bonds underpins the transmission of any late-medieval text. Actor-Network Theory, developed by Bruno Latour (2013), considers each network value in its individual contexts, with none considered unique for possessing distinctive qualities. This model is particularly useful when attempting to construct networks of transmission and circulation for numerous versions of a late-medieval vernacular romance, especially where the majority of texts are anonymous. It recognises the heterogeneity of each value, whilst simultaneously representing each value as part of a larger whole. The principle value-qualifier of my network is limited to the likewise limited corpus of the *Awntyrs*. The remarkable survival of this text provides a unique opportunity to investigate the circulation patterns of Arthurian material in late-medieval Britain, a task that is necessary if a more complete understanding of late-medieval literary culture is to be achieved. Felicity Riddy argues that it is only by

⁷⁶ For a discussion of the textual study of the *Awntyrs* and attempts at recension, see Ch. 2.4 ‘Corruption, Discordances and the Rejection of the Stemma’.

including Arthurian romance that this is possible, as these texts are the only romances which are truly inclusive, crossing all boundaries of language, geography, gender, calling and class. Riddy further notes that Arthurian culture was decisively textual, not gaining currency in non-literate culture in the same way as other legends, such as Robin Hood.⁷⁷ By constructing the historical social networks through which the *Awntyrs* circulated, an idea of its significance within different textual communities can be established. Arthur Bahr states that an important aim of *Fragments and Assemblages* is to provoke debate about ‘how to regard the interactions between medieval texts and the manuscripts that contain and shape them’.⁷⁸ One way to explore this is to construct a network. So far, many preconceptions of ‘popularity’, or the wider circulation of Middle English Arthurian texts, have been limited by the recognition that they survive in few manuscript numbers. Yet, the widespread nature of Arthurian literature and culture, which as Felicity Riddy notes is (from what evidence survives), explicitly textual rather than oral, is not represented by the limited, fragmented manuscript record. Thus, the texts must have interacted with the manuscripts in a way to lessen the likelihood of their survival.

As set out by Latour (2013), the network is constituted of two types of data. The first ‘general type’ in this study is the text of the *Awntyrs*, currently four versions extant, a number which can be extended by evidence of other versions coming to light, for example if a textual or linguistic study yields a lost exemplar text which can be certainly determined. The second type of data is all of the information that ‘define[s] the quality of the activity in question’, in this case, the production contexts, the social network to which the text is connected, and the reception contexts of each text, as it is determined by material evidence. The first type of data explores ‘the extraordinary diversity of the

⁷⁷ Riddy, ‘Reading for England’, p. 331.

⁷⁸ Bahr, p. 4.

associations' that define the *Awntyrs*; the second explores 'the diversity of the values', and thus the heterogeneous textual communities, of each. The usefulness in Latour's Actor-Network Theory is its breaking-down of subject-object opposition, in its insistence that 'the whole is smaller than its parts'. That is to say that each 'part' represents a large amount of specific information, which when viewed individually appears larger and more detailed than when each of these parts is viewed as one whole big picture, from which perspective the detailed information appears smaller, and thus less significant.⁷⁹ Through breaking down these oppositions, a network can connect the literary and textual evidence together, whilst recognising their distinct qualities. A literary analysis considers ideas of audience (who often leave no physical trace) and can be suggestive of particular social and geographical reception contexts – suggested, for example, by the locations named in the text and by the references to other works of literature that expect a certain level of recognition from its readers. A literary analysis considers also the text's interaction with formal techniques, such as its relationship to those texts which share its very specific verse form. These construct one network of a social imaginary formed by the intertextual relations of the poem. A textual analysis considers the material, both of the text itself; its content, dialect, shared errors and the material of its physical form, such as paper stocks, scribal hand, layout and decoration, as determined by each individual text-version. This constructs a material network, situated in codicological evidence. Lastly, a social network will be constructed from extra-textual evidence, such as details of the texts' provenance, ownership, scribe, and the extended social network within which these people were engaged, based on surviving documentary evidence.

If there is one question we no longer have to raise, it is whether interest stems from the individual, the object, or the influence of the milieu [...] Interest arises impromptu. And it attaches *people* and *things*, more or less

⁷⁹ Latour, *Modes of Existence*, p. 416.

passionately. The “careers of objects”, the “social life of things”, the terms hardly matter [...] it arises *between* two entities that do not know, before it arises, that they could be attached to each other. [...] To follow an experience, it would be useless to try to retrace what comes from the Subject or from the Object [...] but a simple exchange of equivalents⁸⁰

The usefulness of Latour lies in this observation. Previous studies have focused on the reconstruction of stemmatics and authorial originals, when this is not crucial for appreciating literary culture. The network allows for a consideration of the circulation of a cultural object, i.e. a text (by very definition a social thing) in this attachment between people and things. The constructing of a network invites the consideration and visualisation of the ‘simple exchange of equivalents’, a non-hierarchical, non-linear representation of medieval literary culture, in keeping with the historical materialism of Benjamin and Bahr and the rejection of a linear ‘eternal time’. The production of multiple networks, using the critical approaches of cultural mapping, facilitates the study of fragmented and vestigial texts by situating the fragments in defined, historical data, thereby allowing for the meaningful interpretation of disrupted and fragmentary textual transmissions. The limitations of both the network and cultural mapping, however, rest in their inflexible modes of representation. The analogy of the constellation proffered by Bahr and extended by its integration with both cultural mapping and network theory places the surviving evidence in a more flexible, dynamic model. It too recognises the heterogeneity of its values, but it also has the potential to recognise that texts which are no longer extant possess equally significant contributions to our understanding of late-medieval literary culture. The conceptual function of the constellation is more productive in this way, as it provides a more nuanced analogy for interrelated, non-linear relations of historical objects, one that considers the limited perspective of the surviving evidence as determined by its present situation. Thus, this

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 428-29.

study is my experience with the past, with *Awntyrs* as it survives today. The three most essential aspects of the constellation analogy, as I identify it, are:

1. that it is a set of multiple, intersecting temporalities created by the histories of authors, scribes, owners, and readers;
2. that it is subject to historical perspective, a corpus which is determined by that which has survived, and by how far this evidence can extend to reveal non-extant texts;
3. that the constellation, its shape and definition, is subject to change and reinterpretation; it is not fixed, but changes from different perspectives, disrupted by new evidence or by the reinterpretation of the existing evidence.

This is not a search for an original text or author. My aim is to use the remarkable survival of the *Awntyrs* to explore the range of literary processes and practices of diverse late-medieval textual and literary communities. To do this, I will necessarily focus on certain aspects of each texts' use that represent the material object in specific moments of its lifetime.

1.3 A Constellation of Texts

Central to this thesis is the examination of material codicological details and the networks through which texts came to be together *before* the moment of their compilation, where they are then arrested in manuscript form. Even though the final picture might change, depending on how the missing evidence fits with the surviving evidence, by engaging with the book in this way, as process, I can see more of a texts' 'historical moments' and there is greater opportunity for 'metaphorical potentialities' to reveal themselves. For example, once the patterns of circulation for the *Awntyrs* have been established, I can look further into other texts which circulated in the same networks as *Awntyrs*, to create a larger interpretive compilation of texts, one that is made up of texts that are connected to the surviving copies of *Awntyrs*, through their

physical, linguistic, or literary features. New potentialities then arise; a much vaster collection of texts can be read according to the new aestheticism being put forward by Bahr, and therefore more meaningful literary interpretations of late-medieval vernacular literature can be made. By using codicological, textual, linguistic, and historical evidence to establish which texts may have been transmitted together, circulating in booklets and as textual nodes, I can form a constellation of texts, a collection of multiple, disparate pieces. When mapped onto the social networks within which these texts were circulating, these disparate pieces will form a larger, meaningfully interpretable picture, one that shows the cultural potentialities of medieval authors, scribes, readers and listeners. This opens up the possibilities that other compilations (in their physical form, by which I mean other codices) may have at one time existed, compiled of multiple variations of these texts, and could therefore represent some of the potential codices now lost to us. In the very least, this constellation can demonstrate the range of texts available to local textual communities, developing our understanding of the literary culture of late-medieval England and moving beyond a generalised definition to reveal a complex culture made up of interrelated, complex networks of people and text.

CHAPTER 2 The Living Text(s)

A detailed account of the texts and manuscripts of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* as well as an overview of the textual criticism which has arisen from nearly two-hundred years of scholarship can be found in this chapter.¹ The poem survives in more manuscripts than any other Middle English Arthurian romance of the later-medieval period, extant in four manuscripts from the fifteenth century. The poem can be related to a large corpus of literature through its complex metre and borrowing of material from earlier texts. Students of the *Awntyrs* have related it to religious exempla, prophetic poetry, dream visions and of course to other Arthurian works. Numerous editions have been produced from the late-eighteenth to the twentieth century, each providing a unique version of the poem intended for different audiences. This chapter engages with the two critical editions of the *Awntyrs* produced by Robert J. Gates (1969) and Ralph Hanna (1974).² Both editors agree that the poem represents two episodes, Hanna extending this to argue that the poem is in fact two separate texts by different poets that have been compiled together at a later date. This is reflected in the layout of his edition. The majority of scholarship since Hanna's edition has been concerned with the structure and authorship of the *Awntyrs*, A. C. Spearing (1982) and Helen Phillips (1993) offering two of the most important contributions to this debate.³ The physical layout and material features of the text impacted the way audiences engaged with the poem. Following the work of Murray J Evans, I compare the material evidence from the *Awntyrs*' four surviving manuscripts.⁴ I also return to the question of the poem's corrupted textual transmission in this chapter; both Gates and Hanna agree that recension of the text is impossible, but I argue that the extraordinary survival of the *Awntyrs* provides a unique opportunity to reconceptualise the significance of Middle English Arthurian

¹ *The Awntyrs off Arthure* (Carlisle, c. 1424-25); *DIMEV* 2628; *Manual* 1.I.30.

² *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Robert J. Gates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969); *The Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna.

³ Spearing, 'Central and Displaced Sovereignty'; Phillips, 'Structure and Meaning'.

⁴ Murray J. Evans, *Rereading Middle English Romance, Manuscript Layout, Decoration, and the Rhetoric of Composite Structure* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

romance in fifteenth-century culture.⁵ In the appendices, I have provided my own descriptions and collations of the four *Awntyrs*’ manuscripts.⁶ I did not set out to create a new edition, as there are already numerous exemplary ones. The questions I am asking of the text differ from those asked by Gates and Hanna, whose research was intended to produce a “best” poem, a single version of an authoritative text. My interest is in the multitude of voices each text represents, celebrating these differences for what they can say about the people who used them.

2.1 Surviving Texts

The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelane is the title given to a Middle English poem that survives in four fifteenth-century manuscripts: London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a (hereafter Lambeth 491a); Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91 (hereafter Lincoln 91); Princeton, University Library, MS Taylor 9 *olim.* Ireland-Blackburne (hereafter Princeton Taylor 9); and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324 (hereafter Oxford Douce 324). These four versions present a relatively stable text of alliterative verse, written in thirteen-line stanzas of nine long and four shorter lines, rhyming *ababababdddc*. The poem further features frequent iteration between the eighth and ninth line, as well as consistent stanza-linking – a word or phrase is carried over from the final line of one stanza to the opening line of the next. In all but one of the versions, the poem ends with the same lines with which it began, making the overall poem cyclical and iterative in structure.⁷ At its longest, the poem is fifty-five stanzas, suggesting the text was originally 715 lines in total. None of the four surviving versions run to this length, the longest being Oxford Douce 324 at 713 lines. Nevertheless, the editors of the poem present a composite text of 715 lines, emending the text of Oxford Douce 324 with lines from the

⁵ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, p. 49; *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, pp. 52-53.

⁶ See appendices B-E.

⁷ Robert Thornton ends the text with a rhyming couplet: ‘This fferly by felle full sothely to sayne
[In yggillwede fforeste at þe Ternwathelayne’, in Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91, fol. 161^r.

other three texts to make up for this deficit. The title appears in only one surviving version, written by the scribe Robert Thornton into the upper margin of Lincoln 91. The two principle settings of the narrative are the Tarn Wadling in Inglewood Forest, Cumberland and ‘Rondolesette Halle’, likely located somewhere between Inglewood Forest and Carlisle, the seat of King Arthur.⁸ The poem takes place in winter during ‘*fermesones*’, the closed hunting season. As King Arthur and the royal hunting party chase the female deer through the forest, Queen Gaynour, accompanied by Sir Gawain, rests separately by a laurel tree. Suddenly the weather turns, the sky darkens, and with hail and rain the ghastly ghost of queen Gaynour’s mother appears from the tarn to speak to the queen. After a lengthy conversation centred on the Seven Works of Mercy and featuring a prophecy of the downfall of King Arthur, the ghost disappears, the weather clears, and Gaynour and Gawain are reunited with the hunting party, sharing with them their marvellous encounter. The next scene opens with a description of King Arthur seated at supper, the feast interrupted by the Scottish knight Sir Galeron of Galloway and his lady love, who have come to claim back land taken unjustly by King Arthur and gifted to Sir Gawain. Sir Galeron is generously hosted by Gawain and in the morning the two knights take mass, arm themselves and then do battle, fighting to the near-death. They are saved by Sir Galeron’s lover who begs the Queen to intercede. Gaynour asks the King to make the knights accord, which they do, all of Sir Galeron’s lands being returned to him, whilst Gawain is awarded the lands of Glamorgan in South Wales and Ulster in Ireland. Andrew Breeze has identified the place names of the *Awntyrs* in two articles, convincingly arguing that the poet had in-depth knowledge of the Ayrshire region of Scotland as well as a potential connection to the young Richard Duke of York (d. 1460) and the wider Neville

⁸ For a discussion of the location and significance of ‘Rondolesette Halle’, see Walkling, ‘The Problem of “Rondolesette Halle”’.

family.⁹ The poem then concludes with the royal party returning to Carlisle. The two knights are dubbed Dukes and Sir Galeron and the maiden are married. Finally, the end stanza has Queen Gaynour writing to all the clerics of the kingdom, requesting them to sing ‘a mylione of masses’ for her mother’s departed soul.

The poem has been dated to c. 1424-25 based largely on the identification of the lands in the Cumberland-Westmorland region and the association of the region with the powerful Neville family: Ralph Neville, 1st Earl of Westmorland (d. 1425), Warden of the West March along the Anglo-Scottish border from 1386 until his death in October 1425.¹⁰ Both Andrew Breeze and Rosamund Allen convincingly argue that the poem was likely commissioned before this magnate’s death.¹¹ Hanna likewise dates the poem to the early fifteenth century, stating it is ‘probably a work of the second decade of the fifteenth century’.¹² The *Awntyrs* remains an anonymous work. Previously the poem has been identified as the work of a Scottish poet: Andrew Wyntoun argued that the *Awntyrs* was the work of ‘Huchon of the Aule Reale’, who, according to Wynton, also composed *The Gest of Arthure* and *The Pistill of Susan*.¹³ Similarly, F. J. Amours includes the *Awntyrs* within his edition of five alliterative poems of Scottish origin, including: *the Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawane*, *The Buke of the Howlat*, *Rauf Coilyear*, *The Pistill of Susan* and *The Awntyrs Off Arthure*.¹⁴ These arguments are based largely on the poems thirteen-line alliterative form, with the Scottish context for the poem discussed most recently by Nicola Royan, who relates the *Awntyrs* to *Golagros and Gawane*, *Rauf Coilyear* and *The Buke of*

⁹ Andrew Breeze, ‘*The Awntyrs Off Arthure*, Cywryd Of Kent, and Lavery Burn’, *Notes and Queries*, 45.4 (1998), 431–32; Breeze, ‘Caerphilly, Oysterlow and Wexford’.

¹⁰ Anthony Tuck, ‘Neville, Ralph, first earl of Westmorland (c. 1364–1425)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19951>> [accessed 28 August 2018].

¹¹ Breeze, ‘Caerphilly, Oysterlow and Wexford’, p. 68; Allen, ‘Place-Names’, p. 194.

¹² *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, p. 52.

¹³ *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun* IV, ed. F. J. Amours, 6 vols, STS 1st ser. 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 63 (Edinburgh and London, 1903-14), pp. 21-23.

¹⁴ *Scottish Alliterative Poems in Riming Stanzas*, ed. by F. J. Amours, 2 vols, STS 1st ser. 27, 28 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1897).

the Howlat on the basis of similarity in theme as well as form.¹⁵ These later poems, Royan argues, were likely influenced by the *Awntyrs*, which ‘inflected some of the most interesting Scots poems of the fifteenth century’.¹⁶ I am doubtful of the Scottish authorship of the poem, and instead more inclined towards the identification of the *Awntyrs* with a poet in Cumberland as I find the poem’s connection to this region most convincing. Furthermore, study into the dialectal features of the surviving four texts would indicate that the poem was originally a Northern production rather than a Scottish one. Northern features are found even in the non-Northern manuscripts of Oxford Douce 324 and Lambeth 491a.¹⁷ Gates summarizes the language study of Paul Burtneiss, who analysed significant dialect features from the rhyme words of the four manuscripts, concluding that ‘the assumption of Northern provenance...seems to be correct.’¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is evident from the poem’s related texts that the *Awntyrs* had a presence in Scotland that endured into the fifteenth century but is not represented by any surviving manuscript.

The thirteen-line alliterative stanza of the *Awntyrs*, featuring concatenation and a wheel of shorter verse lines, is also shared by two other Middle English poems, *Three Dead Kings* and *Somer Sunday*. Thurlac Turville-Petre makes a compelling argument that these texts participated in the same literary culture, with the poet of *Awntyrs* almost certainly having knowledge of both poems.¹⁹ All three of these texts are concerned with the mutability of life, both *Three Dead Kings* and the *Awntyrs* featuring the return of a dead royal parent, whereas *Somer Sunday* shares with the *Awntyrs* a vision of Fortune’s Wheel. The concatenation found in *Awntyrs* occurs in five other romances, as identified by

¹⁵ Nicola Royan, ‘The Alliterative *Awntyrs* Stanza in Older Scots Verse’, *Medieval Alliterative Poetry: Essays in Honour of Thorlac Turville-Petre*, ed. by John A. Burrow & Hoyt N. Duggan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), pp. 185-94.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

¹⁷ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, p. 30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-34.

¹⁹ Turville-Petre, “‘Summer Sunday’”, pp. 1-14.

Margaret P. Medary and discussed further by Gates.²⁰ These are *Sir Perceval of Galles*, *Sir Degrevant*, *The Avowyng of Arthur*, *Sir Tristrem*, and *Thomas of Erceldoune*.²¹ It is worth noting that several of these romances appear compiled together: *Thomas of Erceldoune*, *Sir Degrevant* and *Sir Perceval of Galles* are transmitted with the *Awntyrs* in Lincoln 91; the *Avowyng* with the *Awntyrs* in Princeton Taylor 9; and *Sir Tristrem* is a text that certainly circulated amongst similar audiences, owned by female readers in the same social networks as the *Awntyrs*, as discussed in chapter 3.

A key recognisable source for the first half of the *Awntyrs* is the *Trental of St Gregory*. A popular text in which Pope Gregory the Great is visited by his dead mother during Mass who confesses that she had given birth to an illegitimate child and was suffering for her sins in Purgatory. She requests that her son say thirty masses for her soul, after which she reappears to him beautified, so glorious that he believes her to be the Virgin Mary. This text, extant in ten manuscripts, was widely circulated, reaching a popular audience. The parallels between the *Awntyrs* and the *Trental* are obvious, indicating that this was the likely inspiration for the first half of the *Awntyrs* poem. The *Awntyrs* poet expands the ghost's role and adapts the *Trental* narrative to present a more intimate mother-daughter relationship. Hanna recognises *The Trental of St Gregory* as at least an analogue to the *Awntyrs* and likewise compares *Awntyrs* to the purgatorial texts of *St Patrick's Purgatory* and *Owayne Miles*.²² Hanna connects the *Awntyrs* to other contemporary Arthurian works *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine*, *The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell* and *The Avowing of King Arthur*, identifying that these poems all share

²⁰ Margaret P. Medary, 'Stanza-Linking in Middle English Verse', *Romanic Review*, 7 (1916), 243-70 (p. 251).

²¹ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, p. 4.

²² *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, p. 25.

a narrative setting, the action of each poem taking place in the Tarn Wadling of Inglewood Forest.²³

Sir Galeron, the Scottish knight who challenges the court in the second half of the *Awntyrs*, appears in at least two other Middle English romances: featured in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* as Palomydes' godfather in the scene of his baptism and in the ship with Gawain in the naval warfare episode of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.²⁴ The alliterative *Morte Arthure* can also be identified as a recognisable source for the *Awntyrs*. William Matthews establishes the textual relationship between the *Awntyrs* and the alliterative *Morte*, observing that the heraldic devices, topographical details and personal names are featured in near-identical phrases in both texts.²⁵ Hanna likewise recognises that the alliterative *Morte* served as a direct source for the *Awntyrs*, with evidence of 'abundant and unmistakable borrowing', building on observations made by both Matthews and Gates.²⁶ I explore the relationship between the alliterative *Morte* and the *Awntyrs* further in the following chapter. In contrast, Hanna states that 'the poet's relationship to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* seems more tentative and correspondingly more dubious.'²⁷ The connections Hanna draws between *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the *Awntyrs* are based largely on the hunt. This represents the perspective of surviving material. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is one of the few surviving romances with such a long and detailed description of the hunt, which like the *Awntyrs*, takes place in the winter and is written in alliterative verse. However, this could have been a much more common poetic occurrence than is suggested by just two surviving poems of similar metrical form.

²³ Ibid., pp. 32-35.

²⁴ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, pp. 18-19; King Arthur cries: 'O Gawain! O Galyran! These good mens bodies!' as they are about to be boarded by the Spanish in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, as in *King Arthur's Death*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003), pp. 113-238 (line 3636).

²⁵ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, pp. 26-29.

²⁶ *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, p. 38.

²⁷ Ibid.

Although interesting conclusions can be drawn from a literary comparison of these texts, it seems unlikely that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* was a direct source text for the *Awntyrs*, rather it seems more likely that alliterative poetry of this kind was far more common than we assume.

The four manuscripts of the *Awntyrs* were all produced during the fifteenth century. Lambeth 491a, produced in London c. 1425-35, is the earliest copy extant. Lincoln 91 was produced in the North Riding of Yorkshire by Robert Thornton c. 1430-50 and Princeton Taylor 9 was most likely produced in Lancashire, c. 1450-75. Oxford Douce 324 is the latest witness of the text, dated paleographically to the third quarter of the fifteenth century and previously located to Derbyshire because of its dialect. I suggest that Oxford Douce 324 was a London manuscript produced in a commercial context c. 1460-80. This is based on codicological and dialectal evidence, as well as the manuscript's stylistic similarity to other commercially produced romances of the capital that date from this period, for example those extant in London, BL, MS Harley 2252.²⁸ The varying contexts of how, where and why these manuscripts were produced are examined in more depth in the following chapters of this thesis, principally in Chapter 4: 'Textual Communities'. Each surviving version of *Awntyrs* is copied in a different dialect, representative of a geographically wide circulation. The text appears in the capital very soon after the poem's original composition in Cumberland, the poem at this point already witness to a corrupt textual tradition, as I will discuss further below. The appearance of *Awntyrs* in another London manuscript more than twenty years after Lambeth 491a was produced suggests that the poem continued to be transmitted into the city throughout its life: Oxford Douce

²⁸ London, BL, MS Harley 2252 is a sixteenth-century manuscript compiled by London mercer and bookseller John Colyns. It contains two romance texts; *Ipomydon* and the stanzaic *Morte Arthure*, both produced as independent booklets. See Carol M. Meale, 'The Compiler at Work: John Colyns and BL, MS Harley 2252', *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), pp. 82-103 (p. 83).

324 features a different dialect to Lambeth 491a and different divisions in the text. Since one version was evidently not copied from the other, multiple copies of the poem must have been in circulation within London. Likewise, the *Awntyrs* was one of the earliest texts to be copied by Robert Thornton into Lincoln 91, indicating that a corrupted version of the poem was shared relatively soon after the poem's initial composition in Cumberland c. 1424-25. The Lincoln 91 version was likely acquired through a separate line of transmission to the London text of Lambeth 491a, as it was being copied by Thornton in Yorkshire as early as 1430. The information in Table 2.1 (figured below) demonstrates that the poem was copied in various materials; the manuscripts being produced in paper, parchment and in mixed-media quires. It is significant that all four versions begin a new quire, on a recto, with an initial of at least two lines, all presented as a single column of text.²⁹ This would suggest the significance of the text to its readers, the thirteen-line initial of Lincoln 91 is particularly striking. Further remarkable is that all four extant copies can be said to form a booklet, at once independent from the other texts of the manuscript, if not still – as is the case for Oxford Douce 324. This may account for the high losses of once extant copies and may also indicate the typical material form for Arthurian romance.

²⁹ For a discussion of the *Awntyrs* beginning a new quire, see Ch. 4.3 'Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91'.

Table 2.1: The four manuscripts of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*

MS	LONDON, LAMBETH PALACE LIBRARY, MS 491a	LINCOLN, CATHEDRAL LIBRARY, MS 91	PRINCETON, UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, MS TAYLOR 9	OXFORD, BODLEIAN LIBRARY, MS DOUCE 324
DATE LOCATION	c. 1425-35, London	c. 1430-50, Yorkshire	c. 1450-75, Lancashire	c. 1460-80, London
DIALECT	Essex, LP: 630, <i>LALME</i>	Yorkshire (N. Riding), LP: 1.98, <i>LALME</i>	Lancashire, LP: 25, <i>LALME</i>	Derbyshire, LP: 320, <i>LALME</i>
SCRIBE	Unknown, likely a junior clerk connected to the Guildhall	Robert Thornton	Unknown	Unknown, potentially a professional scribe
LOCATION IN MS	275r-86v	154r-61r	1r-15v	1r-11v
MATERIAL	Paper and Parchment	Paper	Parchment	Paper
FOLIO SIZE	225 x 146 mm	292 x 209 mm	113 x 64 mm	295 x 203 mm
NUMBER OF LINES	707 (avg. 31 lines per page)	593 (avg. 40 lines per page) *Lacking approx. 106 lines. ³⁰	690 (avg. 24 lines per page)	713 (avg. 32 lines per page)
TITLE		<i>Here Bygynne The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelan[e]</i> Written in red ink in Thornton's hand, along the top margin of fol. 154r		
INITIAL(S)	1. 2-line opening initial "T" in blue and red ink (folio 275r)	1. 13-line opening initial "T" in black and green ink (folio 154r) 2. 4-line initial "T" in red ink (folio 158r)	1. 3-line opening initial "[I]?" blank or damaged (undiscernible) (folio 1r) 2. 2-line initial "H" indicated by guide letter, initial not executed (folio 6v) 3. 2-line initial "T" indicated by guide letter, initial	1. 4-line opening initial "T" in blue and red ink (folio 1r) 2. 2-line initial "T" in blue ink (folio 6r) 3. 2-line initial "G" in blue ink (folio 8v)

³⁰ Based on fol.159 lacking its lower third, with a lacuna of 1 folio directly following. Taken with the average of 40 lines per page, this calculates the loss of text at 106 lines, which would make the complete, undamaged text 699 lines. See appendix C for a collation of this manuscript.

			not executed (folio 11v)	
TEXT DIVISION(S)		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>The knyghte in his colours was armed ful clene</i> (Gates 378) Beginning of the description of Sir Galeron fully armed, before battle with Sir Gawain. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>"How shal we fare," quod þe freke, "þat fondene to fighte"</i> (Gates 261) Gawain's conversation with the Ghost and the prophecy of Arthur's fall. 2. <i>Gawayne was gaily graped in grene</i> (Gates 508) Beginning of the battle between Sir Gawain and Sir Galeron. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>The king to souper is set, [and] serued in [sale]'</i> (Gates 339) Beginning of the feast following the hunt, opening with description of the king seated. 2. <i>Gawayne was gaily graped in grene</i> (Gates 508) Beginning of the battle between Sir Gawain and Sir Galeron following the description of both knights in their armour.
RUBRICATION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stanza marks in the left margin of the text; alternating red and blue every 1st, 5th and 10th line of the 13-line stanza, until line 235 (folio 278v) 2. Stanza marks in the left margin of the text; alternating red and blue every 13 lines to mark the beginning of each stanza, until line 391 (folio 			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stanza marks in the left margin of the text in red ink, marking the opening line of each 13-line stanza, throughout entire text. 2. Red-ink rhyme brackets on the 4-short lines of each stanza, throughout entire text.

	<p>281v)</p> <p>3. Rhyme brackets in black ink on 4-short lines of each stanza (folio 275r only)</p> <p>4. Dashes to mark last 4 lines of each stanza in red or blue ink, folios 278v-281r only.</p>			
INSCRIPTION(S)	<p>1. "Explicit" black ink, in the scribe's hand, bottom margin (folio 286v)</p> <p>2. "Thes Booke" inserted between end of text and "Explicit" in a later hand, black ink.</p>	<p>1. "Explicit" black ink, in Thornton's hand, written twice, with decorative dragon over second explicit. Halfway down folio (folio 161r)</p>	<p>1. "a fyte", written in black ink, aligned to the right of line 260 (folio 6v)</p> <p>2. "a fyte", written in black ink, aligned to the right of line 507 (folio 11v)</p> <p>3. "ffinis" written in black ink, aligned to the right of the last line (folio 15v)</p>	

2.2 Edited Text

The *Awntyrs* was first printed by J. Pinkerton in his *Scottish Poems* (1792), entitled ‘Sir Gawan and Sir Galeron of Galloway’.³¹ There is also a nineteenth-century transcript of Oxford Douce 324 by Francis Douce, present in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 309. Two editions of the text were printed in the nineteenth century in volumes containing Scottish verse, by Frederic Madden keeper of manuscripts of the British Museum and a close friend of Douce in 1839 and another by F. J. Amours in 1897. Both of these editions base their texts on Lincoln 91 and Oxford Douce 324, with Amours producing a parallel text edition.³² A third nineteenth-century edition was produced from the Ireland-Blackburn MS by John Robson in 1842, this time presented as *Three Early English Metrical Romances*.³³ The first modern edition was produced by Robert J. Gates in 1969, which was the first critical edition of the text in a single volume, printed with extensive explanatory notes and a useful critical apparatus. Ralph Hanna’s own edition was produced in 1974, presenting the text as *Awntyrs A* and *Awntyrs B*, divided into two distinct works of poetry. Both editors use Oxford Douce 324 as the base-text for their edition, emending the text from a comparison with the three other manuscript versions. Both editions also provide a description of the four manuscript witnesses and detail their provenance, heavily indebted to the work of Frederic Madden.³⁴ A modern-language version of the poem was then printed in 1988 by Helen Phillips as part of the Lancaster Modern Spelling Texts series, following which three editions were then produced in the last decade of the twentieth century, with *Awntyrs* appearing in multi-volume editions principally for use by

³¹ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, p. 16

³² C. Hurst, ‘Douce, Francis (1757–1834)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7849>> [accessed 28 August 2018]; *Syr Gawayne: A Collection of Ancient Romance-Poems by Scottish and English Authors Relating to That Celebrated Knight of the Round Table*, ed. by Frederic Madden (London: Bannatyne Club, 1839), pp. 95–128; *Scottish Alliterative Poems*, ed. Amours, pp. 115–71.

³³ *Three Early English Metrical Romances*, ed. by John Robson, *Camden Society*, 1st ser.18 (London: Camden Society, 1842), pp. 1–26.

³⁴ *Syr Gawayne*, ed. Madden.

undergraduate students, receiving short introductions and little critical examination. These include an Everyman edition by Maldwyn Mills (1992), a Norton edition of *Middle English Romances* by Stephen Shepherd (1995) and *Eleven Gawain Romances and Tales* edited by Thomas Hahn (1995), also available online as part of the Middle English Texts Series in the Robbins Library Digital Project by the University of Rochester.³⁵ A study of the textual criticism of the *Awntyrs* demonstrates that, as critical positions change, so does one's approach to the text, and thus each new edition that is produced also constructs a new text, with its own imagined audience, with scholars, students and the general reading public all being represented in the various editions that have been produced.

2.3 Episodes and Authors: A Question of Structure

Of all the *Awntyrs* editions, the text produced by Ralph Hanna is the most controversial. In the introduction to his 1974 edition, Hanna argued that the original poem was, in fact, two poems by two different authors, developing observations made of the text by Hermann Lübke in his 1883 dissertation. Hanna extends the work of Lübke to argue that the poem's differences in rhyme, changes of emphasis in iteration, and greater detail of ornament in the second half suggests that the poem is in fact two separate works: *Awntyrs A* (lines 1-338 and 703-15) and *Awntyrs B* (lines 339-702), the first episode featuring the ghost of Gaynour's mother written by one poet, also responsible for the poem's final concluding stanza (lines 703-15), with the Galeron episode by a second poet. Hanna argues that the two poems were brought together by a third author or compiler, who separated the first work from its conclusion and inserted the Galeron text to make one unified work. In his edition Hanna thus decides to separate these three parts of the poem, stating that '[I] ignore the obvious understanding of the scribes, but I hope that through this choice I have

³⁵ *The Awntyrs of Arthure*, ed. by Helen Phillips, *Lancaster Modern Spelling Texts*, ser. 1 (Lancaster: Lancaster University Department of English, 1988).

fulfilled the intention of at least one of the poets.³⁶ Since Hanna's edition, most scholars when engaging with the poem do indeed separate the text after stanza twenty-six, in agreement with Hanna's division of the poem.

The structure of *Awntyrs* as two poems, rather than two episodes, was also argued by Hanna on the basis of literary interpretation:

The Awntyrs A integrates eclectically quite diverse materials of both religious and romance provenance. In contrast, *The Awntyrs B* simply combines some of the most archetypal motifs of medieval romance – the discourteous challenger, the tournament battle, the civilising virtues of Round Table society.³⁷

This reading of the *Awntyrs* disparages the use of convention, dismissing the use of literary features in potentially complex ways as merely simplistic. Hanna's criticism was most fiercely challenged by A. C. Spearing in his 1982 essay on 'Central and Displaced Sovereignty in Three Medieval Poems'. Spearing instead argues for the poem's complex unity based on a structural symmetry which presents the two episodes in a diptych format, with King Arthur, enthroned, described at the very centre of the central stanza of the poem. Spearing argues that:

The two episodes, like the two leaves of a diptych, are indeed separate and self-contained, but there are numerous links between them, and when put together they incite the reader to participate in the creation of a meaning that is larger than either possesses in isolation.³⁸

This structure, Spearing claims, is not uncommon in Middle English literature, and he emphasises the essentially similar structure of the plots within the two episodes; the royal party interrupted by an intruder; the ghost of Gaynour's mother in the first and the stranger Sir Geleron in the second, with both episodes resolved in the concluding two stanzas of the poem, the last lines of which repeat the opening lines of the text. Although Spearing concedes that the stylistic differences observed by Lübke and Hanna means we may be

³⁶ *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, p. 24.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Spearing, 'Central and Displaced Sovereignty', p. 249.

dealing with an accomplished literary compiler rather than poet of *Awntyrs*, he nevertheless convincingly asserts that *Awntyrs* was a product of careful planning by a highly skilled individual. The analysis of *Awntyrs*' structure is still a fertile area of research, with Brett Roscoe having recently carried out a cognitive reading of the poem in which he claims that, in the form that it was read, as one poem containing two episodes, the structure was 'both coherent and incoherent...contributing to the poem's haunting effect.'³⁹ Most scholars have generally accepted Spearing's argument for a unified reading of a text in two episodes, with Margaret Robson being a rare exception.⁴⁰

Helen Phillips provides the most compelling deconstruction of Hanna's argument in an analysis of the poem which likewise problematises the purely literary argument of Spearing. In '*The Awntyrs off Arthure: Structure and Meaning, A Reassessment*', Phillips challenges Hanna's use of statistical analysis to establish the authorship of the *Awntyrs* as the work of two poets.⁴¹ Hanna's main argument is based on his analysis of the iteration between the eighth and ninth lines of the poem's stanzas and the frequency with which this feature occurs in the two halves of the poem. He argues that '[i]n general, the treatment of iteration diverges widely enough to suggest two different authors.'⁴² However, as Phillips observes, this analysis is based first and foremost on how Hanna himself divides the text, rendering his analysis for the most part, inconclusive. Phillips further highlights that the study is based on Hanna's own understanding of the medieval poet's use of iteration, arguing that 'iteration is only one of the stylistic elaborations used by the poet: it has no special power to elucidate the structure'.⁴³ Phillips expands on this in her analysis of the poem's division into episodes, which focuses on the way the text is structured in Princeton

³⁹ Roscoe, 'Reading the Diptych'.

⁴⁰ Margaret Robson, 'From Beyond the Grave: Darkness at Noon in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*', *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, ed. by Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 219-36.

⁴¹ Spearing, 'Central and Displaced Sovereignty'; Phillips, 'Structure and Meaning'.

⁴² *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, p. 20.

⁴³ Phillips, 'Structure and Meaning', p. 65.

Taylor 9, divided into three fittes. Phillips argues that ‘the concept of “iteration” is a modern one and may be too rigid for the various kinds of repetition we find in the central part of the *Awntyrs* stanza’ using examples from the text to convincingly assert that iteration ‘seems to be an expressive device, responsive to context’.⁴⁴ The strength of Phillips’ argument is her consideration of the presentation of the poem in its surviving manuscripts. Although Hanna recognises the varying treatment of the text by its four scribes, he dismisses it, stating that ‘the evidence of the mss. is of no help and introduces some confusions which are perhaps best ignored’.⁴⁵ I am inclined to take the same approach as Phillips: that we must examine each manuscript individually for its own treatment of the text; that a ‘binary **AB** structure is not the inevitable interpretation’; and that it is significant that none of the manuscripts divides the work into the two halves recognised by modern critics.⁴⁶

The *Awntyrs* is introduced in each manuscript with the use of a decorated initial. Lambeth 491a features a red and blue ink initial of two lines and Oxford Douce 324 a four-line initial, also in red and blue ink. The damage to the first folio of the *Awntyrs* in Princeton Taylor 9 makes it difficult to discern the style of the opening initial, but nevertheless it appears it was a three-line letter. Lincoln 91 differs the most, with an enormous thirteen-line initial in green and black ink, extending the length of the entire first stanza of the poem, with added decorative flourishing. Although Thornton, the scribe of Lincoln 91, uses decorative opening initials for other texts compiled in the manuscript, the opening of the initial for *Awntyrs* is the largest. It also differs in colour-scheme from many of the romances that precede it, the significance of this discussed further in Chapter 4. Three of the texts are divided into episodes, evident from the use of decorative initials in

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁵ *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, p. 17.

⁴⁶ Phillips, ‘Structure and Meaning’, p. 65.

Lincoln 91, Princeton Taylor 9 and Oxford Douce 324. Only Lambeth 491a presents no division of text.

Lincoln 91 is the only manuscript to divide the text into two parts, evident from the use of a four-line initial in red ink at folio 158r.⁴⁷ This presents the second episode of the poem commencing with the description of Sir Galeron presenting himself to the court of the King, armed and ready for battle. For Thornton's audience then, Sir Galeron is emphasised as the Scottish knight challenging the court. This may be reflective of the text's northern context, its geographical setting emphasised further by the rhyming couplet Thornton adds to the concluding lines of the poem: 'This fferly by felle full sothely to sayne |In yggillwede fforeste at þe Ternwathelayne'.⁴⁸ It may also be an expression of the scribe's gentry identity, the lord defending his territorial rights from a more powerful lord emphasised through this division of the poem, which likewise stresses the courtesy and chivalric status of the knight. This would be appropriate for a gentleman of Thornton's position and status.

Princeton Taylor 9 and Oxford Douce 324 were both produced in the second half of the fifteenth century and both divide the poem into three episodes. Phillips has discussed the tripartite structure of the *Awntyrs* in Princeton Taylor 9 at length, arguing that the poem's central themes, when divided in this way, are the mutability of life and power with a focus on territorial lordship.⁴⁹ The poem's three episodes are divided textually by inscriptions reading 'a fyte', written in black ink and aligned to the right of the concluding line of an episode, the beginning of a new episode indicated visually by the use of two-line initials that were never executed. The text is divided on folios 6v and 11v, at lines 261 and

⁴⁷ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, line 378.

⁴⁸ Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91, fol. 161^r.

⁴⁹ Phillips, 'Structure and Meaning', pp 70-72.

508 (*Awntyrs*, Gates ed.) This is the only version to not read the ghostly encounter as one unified episode. The second episode begins with Gawain's question to the ghost:

How schall we fare quod gauan þt found[us] to þese fiȝt[us]
and defoules þese folk in fele king[us] londus
Riche rewmes ouer rynnnes a gaynes þe ryȝtus
Wynnes wurschip & wele throghe wrȝtenes of hond[us]
Scho sayd ȝaure king is to couet[us] and his kene knyȝt[us]
(*Awntyrs*, Princeton Taylor 9, fol. 6v)

The text in Princeton Taylor 9 breaks with the rhyme scheme of the poem, which in all other versions alternates between '-ighte' and '-us' rhyme words; rather the text here features a continuous string of '-us' endings for the speech of Gawain. The episode ends with Gawain too, as the scene is set for his battle with Sir Galeron. Thus, the middle episode emphasises the role of Sir Gawain above all, the vision of the wheel of Fortune at the centre of the poem, as argued by Phillips and Spearing.⁵⁰ The end of the episode features Arthur seated in his chair above all others, with Gaynour weeping 'for gauan þe gode' (*Awntyrs*, Princeton Taylor 9, fol. 11v). One the most interesting observations made by Gates in his comparison of the texts is that Princeton Taylor 9 adds the formulaic phrase 'Gawayne the gode' to numerous mentions of Gawain, an eccentricity that is unique to this manuscript.⁵¹ The structure and textual divisions of Princeton Taylor 9 suggests that audience of this manuscript favoured Gawain as a character. The division of the poem into three episodes may also have facilitated its performance, suggesting the use of the Princeton text for household readings, the three episodes perhaps performed as entertainment between courses. It is significant that *The Avowyng of Arthure* and *Sir Amadace*, the other two romances transmitted in Princeton Taylor 9, are also presented in three fittes.

Oxford Douce 324 is likewise divided into three episodes. It offers, however, another unique reading of the text. The second episode in this manuscript commences on

⁵⁰ Spearing, 'Central and Displaced Sovereignty'; Phillips, 'Structure and Meaning'.

⁵¹ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, pp. 58-59.

folio 6v with King Arthur seated for a feast and about to be interrupted. This division of *Awntyrs* has likely had the most influence on the way critics have read the poem, not only because Oxford Douce 324 is the base-text of both critical editions, but also because it is at this point in the poem that the action has been relocated from the forest to the hall, following the concluding of Gaynour's encounter with her mother. In my reading of the poem, this change in location also seems like a natural division, but as is evident from the other extant manuscripts this is only one of multiple possible readings. Oxford Douce 324 indicates the beginning of a new episode with a two-line decorative initial in blue ink at folios 6r and 8v. The third episode in Oxford Douce 324 opens with the same line as episode three in Princeton Taylor 9: 'Gawayne was gaily graped in grene' (*Awntyrs*, Gates ed. 508). The three divisions in this version present the poem as firstly a ghostly encounter, secondly a challenge to the king, and thirdly a battle. The divisions of Oxford Douce 324 are evocative of the poem's relation to *Three Dead Kings* and texts such as *The Parlement of Thre Ages*, as it presents firstly the dead, secondly the lord in his power and thirdly the unproven knight still in the joys of youth.

Other features of the poem's layout and decoration in the four manuscripts elucidate interesting parallels between the metropolitan (and potentially commercial) versions and the copies of the poem produced for regional households. Both Lambeth 491a and Oxford Douce 324 make use of coloured rubrication, namely stanza marks and rhyme brackets for the wheel of the stanza. Stanza marks are used consistently in Oxford Douce 324 and are inconsistent in Lambeth 491a, where the scribe first uses stanza marks at the first, fifth and tenth line of the stanza, recognising each unit of the verse, before changing to only every 1st line from folio 278v (*Awntyrs*, Gates ed. 235). However, from folio 281v (*Awntyrs*, Gates ed. 391) no decorative features are present. These inconsistencies perhaps show the scribe's developing understanding of the poem's metre, or otherwise are an example of the scribe practicing with different visual presentations of the text. The latter

would seem more likely, given the scribe's reputation for copying alliterative poetry.⁵² Though this demonstrates a change in the scribe's practice, I do not think it is enough to indicate divisions in the text.

Robert Thornton's treatment of the *Awntyrs* in Lincoln 91 is also inconsistent, but in a way that differs significantly from the scribe of Lambeth 491a. Though the opening thirteen-line initial would suggest that Thornton was aware that the stanzas of the poem were thirteen lines in length, he copies the last four short lines of the poem as two long alliterative lines, even though they do not follow the alliterative long-line form. Thornton also copies the text without any indication of stanza division. At the thirteenth stanza, however – the first stanza of folio 156r – Thornton does begin to recognise the short lines of the poem, writing them as such from this point on in the text, using rhyme brackets to indicate the first three short lines, with the fourth short, final line of each stanza aligned to the right of the other three. This would perhaps indicate Thornton's developing awareness of the poem's form as he copies it, potentially indicating that the thirteen-line opening initial was copied from Thornton's exemplar, or more likely completed after the copying of the full text, as none of the lines of the initial are indented, but rather the opening letter 'I' is displayed to the left of the aligned column of text. The layout and decoration of Princeton Taylor 9 shares some features commonly found in commercial productions. Guide letters are used for the initials, none of which were executed, and there is an abundance of blank space, the text spaced generously with an average 24 lines per page. The spacing remains consistent throughout the text and it is visually similar to Oxford Douce 324, though it lacks the use of coloured rubrication present in the later manuscript. It seems likely that Princeton Taylor 9 may have been copied from a commercially-

⁵² See Ch. 4.1 'London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a'.

produced exemplar or copied by a commercial scribe for the use of the Hale family in Lancashire, an argument that has been previously made by Michael Johnston.⁵³

As the above discussion demonstrates, the varying treatment of the poem by its four scribes suggests that no one, authoritative text can exist. The divisions of the poem into episodes of different length alter the meaning as well as the audience's engagement with the *Awntyrs*. The presentation of the text differs between all four manuscripts, with only one exception: all manuscripts present the text as one unified literary work, explicitly communicated in both Lambeth 491a and Lincoln 91 by the use of an *explicit*. The scribes and readers of the *Awntyrs* understood it to be one poem. Curiously, similar episode divisions occur in other Arthurian romances, yet the unity of these romances is not questioned by modern critics. For example, the alliterative *Morte Arthure* has episodes contained within it which vary in theme and tone significantly, as with the Gawain and Sir Priamus episode. This change in tone is accepted perhaps because of the length of the poem, whereas the change in tone in *Awntyrs*, a much shorter text, is considered by Hanna to signify a change of poet. The alliterative *Morte* is copied by the same scribe as *Awntyrs* in Lincoln 91, and is similarly presented as one poem, with divisions in the text indicated through decorative initials, the end of the poem communicated through an *explicit* in both cases. However, because the alliterative *Morte* survives in only this one version, Thornton's treatment of the text in Lincoln 91 is given a certain authority, uncomplicated as it is by versions that offer different and challenging interpretations. This is the case even though neither the *Morte* nor the *Awntyrs* represents an authorial original. The multiple copies of the *Awntyrs* problematizes its structure and complicates our modern understanding of text as a single entity. Yet, in their different approaches to the episodes of the poem, the four manuscript copies represent multiple audience responses to what is

⁵³ Michael Johnston, 'The Sociology of Middle English Romance: Three Late Medieval Compilers' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ohio State University, 2007), p. 288.

otherwise a relatively stable literary work, revealing the heterogeneity of late-medieval consumers of Arthurian romance.

2.4 Corruption, Discordances and the Rejection of the Stemma

According to both editors of the *Awntyrs*, none of the four surviving manuscripts provides an accurate reproduction of an author's holograph. Hanna states that 'the four texts all agree in error at a number of points, a sign that the ms. tradition, so far as we are capable of reconstructing it, is corrupt.'⁵⁴ Likewise, Gates agrees that the descent of the manuscripts is mixed, to the extent that 'the attempt to construct a stemma on which to base an edition would be useless'.⁵⁵ All four texts agree in error on enough occasions to suggest that they are derived in one stage from an archetype that also contained those errors, thus suggesting they are transmitted from a corrupted textual tradition. These errors are first detailed by Paul Burtneß in his study of the *Awntyrs*.⁵⁶ Burtneß was the first to argue that establishing a genealogy for the four surviving versions was impossible on the basis of six shared errors, reproduced by Gates in his edition.⁵⁷ The two most conclusive instances of shared error being:

1. The ninth line of stanza 4 (*Awntyrs*, Gates ed. 48) lacks in all four manuscripts, and is the only line missing in all four texts.
2. The rhyme word of line 462 (*Awntyrs*, Gates ed.) should read 'leste' to maintain the rhyme, but in all manuscripts (except for Lincoln 91, which is here lacking half a folio), all read 'lost'.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, p. 52.

⁵⁵ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, p. 72.

⁵⁶ Paul Sidney Burtneß, 'A Language Study of "The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyn"' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Chicago, 1953), pp. 138-48.

⁵⁷ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, pp. 32-34.

⁵⁸ Burtneß, pp. 9-10, reproduced in Gates, pp. 42-43.

Though all four versions agree in these errors, at other points only some of the manuscripts agree in error, Hanna arguing that ‘the Lincoln and Lambeth versions seem to form one genetic group, but both mss. frequently cross genetic lines to agree in error with Douce and Ireland.’⁵⁹ It is interesting that these loosely defined genetic groups where Lincoln 91 and Lambeth 491a seem to form one group, with Princeton Taylor 9 and Oxford Douce 324 forming another, is supported by the similarities in textual division apparent in the latter two manuscripts, detailed above. Gates also recognises this, similarly arguing that Lincoln 91 and Lambeth 491a ‘agree in a variant reading...far more often than any two other MSS’.⁶⁰ I would suggest that, copied relatively soon after the poem’s composition in c. 1424-25, these two texts were more directly related to the source of the poem’s circulation than either Princeton Taylor 9 or Oxford Douce 324, which are later versions of the poem. Instead, the latter two versions of the *Awntyrs* may represent a different branch of transmission that potentially originated in Derbyshire, the dialect of Oxford Douce 324 representing this region, even though the manuscript itself was likely produced in London.

The corruption of the text forces us to reject the stemma as a reliable model for textual transmission in the case of the *Awntyrs*. That none of the four extant texts can be said to be a copy of another, with enough disagreements to suggest that there are significant gaps in the transmission of the poem, is further indicated by the geographical remove and differences in dialect represented by the four surviving versions. However, in failing to represent the transmission of the poem from an authorial copy to its surviving manuscript witnesses, the material remains of the *Awntyrs* represent the popularity of a literary tradition: the empty spaces between the copies of the surviving texts are suggestive of copies which are now lost, the gaps in transmission all functioning as potential versions of the poem which may have once existed. It is evident that the poem enjoyed a wide

⁵⁹ *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, pp. 52-53.

⁶⁰ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, p. 72.

circulation. The relation of the poem to various other literary traditions extends this further, as with the poem's influence on Scots romance, discussed above. This type of analysis is not possible for any other Arthurian Middle English poem, the majority of which survive in just one manuscript copy, as with the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the stanzaic *Mort Arthur* – even Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* survives in only one manuscript copy, though it was of course later printed. These texts offer very little insight to the wider circulation of Arthurian romance in the fifteenth century. In contrast, the *Awntyrs* provides the scholar with a unique opportunity to reassess the popularity of Arthurian romance. The material survival of the *Awntyrs* can represent four unique manuscript contexts, each of the four texts giving vital insight into the diverse audiences that engaged in this literary tradition. It is these audiences I explore in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3 Literary Communities of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*

This chapter outlines the literary communities for *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, exploring the fictional, implied, intended and actual audiences of the poem as can be constructed from an extended literary analysis.¹ A *literary community*, as previously established, is both more interpretative and more inclusive than a *textual community*: it allows for an audience to exist beyond the limitations of a surviving physical text.² This is of particular importance when considering Middle English romance since the fragmentary nature of this genre's material survival makes discussing and defining its audiences more complex, as Carol Meale argues in her 1994 essay "'Gode men / Wiues maydnes and alle men": Romance and Its Audiences'.³ Although Meale asserts that 'codicological study offers the best opportunity to investigate audience', it is also essential to interrogate the text itself for what it may reveal about audiences no longer represented by surviving codices. The material survival of the *Awntyrs* demonstrates that this poem enjoyed a remarkable degree of popularity, being produced commercially and circulating in booklet form amongst many kinds of readers, the manuscripts of this poem to be further discussed in the following chapter. This survival would suggest that the *Awntyrs* captured the imaginations of at least one generation of readers in fifteenth-century England with the poem in active circulation from c. 1425-1500. In this chapter, I argue that an extended literary analysis is an essential step in exploring exactly how and why this story mattered to its fifteenth-century audiences.⁴

¹ Paul Strohm, 'Chaucer's Audience(s): Fictional, Implied, Intended, Actual', *Chaucer Review*, 18.2 (1983), 137-45.

² See 'Chapter 1.2: Critical Methods'.

³ Carol M. Meale, "'Gode men / Wiues maydnes and alle men": Romance and Its Audiences', *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer 1994), pp. 209-25 (p. 209).

⁴ George Kane stated that: 'the story in *The Awntyrs* hardly comes to matter at all for it is weak and meagre in all things', except for its least objectional quality, its use of an elaborate alliterative rhyming stanza. George Kane, as quoted in *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, p. 11.

First it is necessary to fully outline the levels of audience Paul Strohm defines in his influential article ‘Chaucer’s Audience(s): Fictional, Implied, Intended, Actual’ (1983). In this article, Strohm developed a working critical vocabulary for discussing and defining complex audiences, a vocabulary which has since been absorbed by numerous literary scholars of medieval imaginative works.⁵ The fictional audience is that which exists within the imagined text, those gathered to listen to a tale, for example, and is constructed by the author. The implied audience is a construct of both the author and the culture which shapes the work, as it responds to themes, conventions and expectations of an audience also familiar with this shared culture. Much like the “horizon of expectations” outlined in the reception theory of Hans Robert Jauss, the implied audience is also historically flexible, subject to different reader responses over time as the culture it is received in also changes.⁶ Nevertheless, Strohm argues that by critically interrogating the text, the “ideal reader” can, hypothetically, be constructed, and this ideal reader can give the critic insight into the intended and actual audiences of a text.⁷ The implied audience must therefore be read against and in relation to the intended audience, as can be discovered from dedications and internal textual references, and in relation to the actual audiences, as substantiated from surviving manuscript and documentary evidence. This chapter considers the “audience within the poetry”; constructing the fictional audience, as well as the implied “ideal” reader/listener, by treating the *Awntyrs* to its first full-length literary analysis, previous studies being confined to either article-length discussions of form and theme or introductions to editions of the poem concerned more with the sources and analogues of

⁵ Two prominent examples include: Nicola McDonald, ‘Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*, Ladies at Court and the Female Reader’, *Chaucer Review*, 35.1 (2000), 22-42; Jordi Sánchez-Martí, ‘Reconstructing the Audiences of the Middle English Versions of *Ipomedon*’, *Studies in Philology*, 103.2 (2006), 153-77.

⁶ Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 79.

⁷ Strohm, ‘Chaucer’s Audience(s)’, p. 140.

the text than with literary interpretation.⁸ Though the fictional audience of the *Awntyrs* is largely conventional, I discuss how these conventions are employed by the author to construct multiple female narrative perspectives. The poem is self-consciously intertextual as the ghost delivers a prophecy taken from the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. The ghost further engages in an intimate conversation with her daughter, to whom she offers practical spiritual guidance. The narrative, I argue, suggests that women reader/listeners were the implied audience of the poem: a woman's body is at the very core of the *Awntyrs*, the narrative structure is formed around three female characters and the dialogue of its female protagonists is concerned with women's desire and spirituality. The *Awntyrs*, I argue, creates a discursive space for the re-negotiation of gender, ultimately functioning to promote the virtues of mercy for its imagined female literary community. Lastly, I consider how this implied audience relates to actual female audiences of medieval romance, as, 'the concept of the implied audience will ultimately be most useful when it is at least partially historicized'.⁹ The "ideal" reader/listener of the *Awntyrs* is placed within the wider cultural contexts of the fifteenth century to identify the intended and actual audiences of the poem, as far as they can be reconstructed. I consider the potential patrons of the *Awntyrs*, connecting the literary evidence to documentary evidence, while exploring in more depth Rosamund Allen's suggestion that Joan Neville *née* Beaufort (d. 1440) Countess of Westmorland may have been the potential patron of the *Awntyrs*.¹⁰

Much of the work in recent decades that has successfully argued for the recognition of multiple, heterogeneous responses to medieval texts has been driven by

⁸ Richard Green argues for the 'audience within the poetry' as in Strohm, 'Chaucer's Audience(s)', p. 140.

⁹ Strohm, 'Chaucer's Audience(s)', p. 140.

¹⁰ Allen, 'Place-Names', p. 183.

concurrent critical discussions in feminist critical theory.¹¹ This chapter hopes to contribute to the many exemplary studies by medieval feminist scholars by interpreting the cultural work that the *Awntyrs* performs within communities of women readers, examining the reception of this poem primarily amongst this audience. This is not to exclude the male reader/listeners of the poem, which were certainly present and which I address more fully in later chapters. Rather, focus on the female reception of the *Awntyrs* rebalances current critical positions, which to date have focused exclusively on the author(s), scribes, and owners of this poem, all assumed to be male.¹² This is owing to the contemporaneous inscriptions of exclusively male names in the text's four manuscript witnesses and persisting ideas in scholarship that gentry and mercantile textual communities were predominantly male spaces, as women of this status were traditionally thought to be illiterate: much work has been done in the past two decades however to challenge these positions.¹³ Two works in particular deserve recognition for breaking open the field of women's book studies: Susan Hagan Cavanaugh's 1980 unpublished doctoral thesis *A Study of Books Privately Owned in England: 1300-1450* and Susan Groag Bell's seminal article 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of

¹¹ See: Rita Felski, *Literature After Feminism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2003); *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*, ed. by Ellen Rooney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For feminist scholarship specifically related to medieval culture, see: Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, 'Reading is Good Prayer: Recent Research on Female Reading Communities', *New Medieval Literatures*, 5 (2002), 229-97; Elizabeth Robertson, 'Medieval Feminism in Middle English Studies: A Retrospective', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 26.1 (2007), 67-79.

¹² The two *Awntyrs*' manuscripts belonging to gentry families are read only in reference to the males of these households, Robert Thornton and John Ireland. See: Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*; Robert Thornton and *His Books*, eds Fein and Johnston. Similarly, London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a has been discussed mostly in relation to its scribe, previously identified as Richard Osborn, and the male scribal network of which he was a part. See: Mooney and Stubbs, *Scribes and the City*, especially Ch. 2 'Richard Osborn, Chamber Clerk, 1400-37', pp. 17-37.

¹³ See: Stock, *Implications of Literacy*; Stock, *Listening for the Text*; Julia Boffey, 'Women Authors and Women's Literacy in Fourteenth-and Fifteenth-Century England', *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 159-82; Rebecca Krug, *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002).

Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture' (1982).¹⁴ Bell's article was among the first to argue for the need to reconceptualise the ways women participated in and influenced culture, and although Bell focused predominantly on elite women, she placed these women into a wider interpretive framework, considering them as transmitters of culture within a European context and as important agents in their world, leading the way for following studies of women's ownership of Books of Hours, patronage of devotional texts and as significant consumers of vernacular literature.¹⁵ Cavanaugh's thesis, on the other hand, presented extensive documentary evidence for the ownership of books by women of varying status; from elite-owners of luxurious items, to more modest and inexpensive books owned by women gentry and bourgeoisie. Cavanaugh did not focus on the study of women's book ownership, but rather collated an owner's index from diverse sources, offering a more comprehensive consideration of private book ownership in the later Middle Ages than any predating study, taking into consideration the evidence from extant manuscripts, library catalogues as well as from the evidence provided by wills and inventories. Cavanaugh's owner index is immensely helpful, as is her ability to interpret what these different sources of evidence reveal about the ways that medieval book owners documented their ownership. Cavanaugh however, recognises the limitations of the extensive owner index presented in her thesis, stating that it only hints at the true extent of book ownership in the later Middle Ages. Her final observations presented in her thesis introduction are worth repeating here:

the sample of evidence on which this study is based demonstrates certain significant points: that literacy was widespread, that women were among the

¹⁴ Susan Hagan Cavanaugh, 'A Study of Books Privately Owned in England: 1300-1450' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1980); Susan Groag Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture', *Signs*, 7.4 (1982), 742-68.

¹⁵ For further studies in this area, see: *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. by Jane H. M. Taylor and Lesley Smith (London and Toronto: The British Library and the University of Toronto Press, 1997); Catherine Sanok, *Her Life Historical: Exemplarity and Female Saints' Lives in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

more important consumers of vernacular literature, and above all, that books perhaps were not uncommon household items.¹⁶

That women were among the more important consumers of medieval vernacular literature is what I wish to explore at more length in this chapter.

A great deal of work has been done in this field since Cavanaugh's study, including John B. Friedman's *Northern English Books, Owners and Makers* (1995) which emphasises the importance of looking beyond the circulation of texts in London: Friedman considers the wills of the dioceses of Beverley, Durham, Ripon and Carlisle, all proved in the Province of York in the years 1369-1497. Wills from the North of England, Friedman observes, survive in greater numbers year by year than wills surviving from the South of England, and thus represent a larger sample of book ownership. His study contributes significantly to Cavanaugh's evidence base and further confirm her observations about the significance of women's engagement in literary culture of the later Middle Ages: Friedman argues that the evidence of northern women owning books is even more pronounced.¹⁷

The evidence provided by wills, though inherently problematic, has nevertheless been used to identify numerous networks of pious female readers. The privileging of religious texts in wills has meant that testamentary evidence has proven a productive source for establishing women's active engagement in book culture.¹⁸ One of the most

¹⁶ Cavanaugh, 'Books Privately Owned', p. 12, p. 457, p. 19.

¹⁷ John B. Friedman, *Northern English Books, Owners, and Makers in the Late Middle Ages* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995), especially pp. 1-21. Due to the uneven survival of wills and testaments I do not think this is an accurate representation, nor do I think it is particularly helpful to consider books and their owners only according to specific regions, but Friedman is useful if considered alongside the study of Cavanaugh to build a larger picture of women owning vernacular literature.

¹⁸ For further discussions of women's devotional literary cultures, see: *Women, The Book and The Godly*, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995); Anne M. Dutton, 'Passing the Book: Testamentary Transmission of Religious Literature to and by Women in England 1350-1500', *Women The Book and The Godly*, eds Smith and Taylor, pp. 41-54; David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries*

significant contributions to the field is Felicity Riddy's essay "'Women talking about the things of God": A Late Medieval Sub-culture', in which Riddy discusses the cross-cultural interactions of lay and religious communities of women actively engaging in textual activity. Drawing on a wealth of manuscript and testamentary evidence, Riddy asserts that 'we should not assume that women were merely passive recipients of books' and that women 'would have had their own sources and networks for procuring texts', demonstrating the significance that further research into female literary networks would yield.¹⁹ Mary C. Erler's *Women, Reading, and Piety in Late Medieval England* (2002) provides further evidence of women as active participants in devotional literary communities and succeeds in further breaking down traditional divisions between lay and religious. Erler makes a convincing case for the circulation of texts through intimate personal connections between women of both spheres, stating that '[t]he cultural ideals offered to women, whether lay or religious, did not differ greatly. And this common female social formation was often based upon texts which were widely distributed and read'.²⁰ This confirms earlier statistical analysis of the transmission of devotional texts in women's wills presented by Anne Dutton, who similarly argued that '[t]here are...no clear patterns in probate and inventory material indicating that female religious had access to different spiritual texts from those available to laywomen, or that women of different social classes had access to different types of texts'.²¹ Like Riddy, Erler relies upon both manuscript and testamentary evidence to demonstrate the social connections

(Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995); Paul Lee, *Nunneries, Learning and Spirituality in Late Medieval English Society: The Dominican Priory of Dartford* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2001); *Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture: Authorship and Authority in a Female Community*, ed. by Jennifer N. Brown and Donna Alfano Bussell (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2012).

¹⁹ Felicity Riddy, "'Women talking about the things of God": A Late Medieval Sub-culture', *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 104-27 (p. 107).

²⁰ Mary C. Erler, *Women, Reading, and Piety in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002), p. 2.

²¹ Dutton, 'Passing the Book', p. 50.

that may have served to transmit texts among female communities, and likewise calls for more research in this area, highlighting the high loss of texts and the limitations of wills to provide a full picture of the complex cultural relationships involved in women's book ownership. Research into women's devotional literary communities is thus incredibly useful in determining women's active participation in the transmission of texts more generally, and much can be gained from incorporating this research into a study of women's engagement with the more fragmentary romance texts, especially as it appears that these texts were likely transmitted through the same social networks. Moreover, the devotional aspects of the *Awntyrs* would suggest its comfortable positioning within these already established reading communities of both female religious and spiritual lay women. As such, I will be discussing the relation of the *Awntyrs* to religious communities and its potential wider readership and transmission amongst pious female readers of the fifteenth century.

Carol Meale asserted that, in England, romances 'form the second largest generic grouping amongst women's books in the Middle Ages as a whole', and much of her work has relied on the interrogation of manuscript evidence, reconsidering how the evidence may represent women readers especially in gentry and mercantile contexts.²² Meale's work has informed much of the research presented here, as well as in later chapters, and many of my conclusions are heavily indebted to her exemplary scholarship.²³ In her essay "'alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englishe, and frensch":

²² Carol M. Meale, "'alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englishe, and frensch": Laywomen and Their Books in Late Medieval England,' *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 128-58 (p. 139).

²³ See: Carol M. Meale, 'Patrons, Buyers and Owners: Book Production and Social Status', *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375-1475*, ed. by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 201-38; Meale, 'Laywomen and Their Books'; Meale, "'Gode men / Wiues maydnes and alle men'"; Carol M. Meale and Julia Boffey, 'Gentlewomen's Reading', *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume III, 1400-1557*, ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), vol. 3, pp. 526-40.

Laywomen and Their Books in Late Medieval England' (1993), Meale provides numerous examples of women owning vernacular texts, expertly matching testamentary evidence to codicological study, providing evidence of women owning Arthurian romances and convincingly arguing for the eclectic literary tastes of many medieval women of varying status.²⁴ Meale further highlights the networks of women bequeathing texts to family members, as well as having books bequeathed to them from male relatives and calls for further research into these networks. What makes Meale's research so rich, is her interpretation of how women were engaging with this literature, going beyond a detailing of evidence to suggest a fuller engagement in cultural activities. Since Meale's 1994 essay "'Gode men / Wiues maydnes and alle men": Romance and Its Audiences', the most extensive consideration of the audiences of medieval romance has been undertaken within two pieces of scholarship: Melissa Furrow's *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (2009) and Amy N. Vines' *Women's Power in Late Medieval Romance* (2011).²⁵ Both take very different approaches, with Furrow offering a general study of romance reception in England across three languages and several centuries. Furrow states that 'we cannot draw conclusions about whether women in great numbers actually read romance, or heard them read' and goes to great lengths to avoid a gendered study of the genre as she argues that evidence of women engaging with romance is too minimal to draw productive conclusions.²⁶ The book, made up of a series of case studies, does not perhaps interrogate audiences nor relate romances to their manuscript survival as much as a reader would hope, but nevertheless brings some insightful readings into the cultural privileging of texts, as well as to previously underrepresented audiences,

²⁴ Meale, 'Laywomen and Their Books', pp. 128-58.

²⁵ Meale, "'Gode men / Wiues maydnes and alle men'", p. 209.

²⁶ Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), p. 227.

providing, for example, convincing evidence of monks reading romance. Vines' study, in contrast, focuses on the representation of women in medieval romance, with particular attention paid to translations of earlier continental literature. Vines convincingly argues that these narratives serve as sites for the representation of female authority and considers the various responses female readers may have had to these representations. Lastly, exciting work in this field is ongoing, with the current project *Women's Literary Culture and the Medieval Canon* led by Dianne Watt at the University of Surrey examining the importance of considering women's engagement with literature in relation to the established literary canon, most notably, to the work of male authors, such as Chaucer, Gower and Hoccleve.²⁷ In this chapter, it is my aim to contribute to this already rich field of scholarship through an assessment of the *Awntyrs*.

Throughout the chapter, I refer to the critical edition of *Awntyrs* provided by Robert J. Gates (1969).²⁸ Gates provides the text with reference to variant readings, accurately representing the four manuscript versions of the poem. All quotes are from this edition unless otherwise stated. However, where the manuscripts present significant disagreements in reading (beyond variants in spelling), I have incorporated these variant readings into my analysis, supplementing Gates' edition with my own reading of the texts. This poem produced multiple readings for multiple audiences. Each of the four manuscript witnesses represent a unique text that complicates a standardised literary analysis, further complicated by the corrupted transmission represented by the surviving versions, discussed at length in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, for clarity of argument I have largely read the poem as one work, without a strict division of episodes, attempting to consider author intention.

²⁷ *Women's Literary Culture & Late Medieval English Writing, Chaucer Review* (Special Issue), 51.1, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy and Diane Watt (2016).

²⁸ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates. All subsequent references to the text follow this edition unless otherwise stated.

3.1 *Awntyrs* and Intertext

The critical framework developed by Strohm to discuss Chaucer's audiences: 'Fictional, Implied, Intended, Actual', becomes arguably more useful for the discussion of anonymous texts since they are not able to be placed in any immediate author-related context. Therefore, the reception context and question of audience becomes by necessity more central to their interpretation. However, many of these texts shared audiences: by considering the anonymously authored alongside canonically recognised texts and authors, such as Chaucer, new audiences can be revealed. Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* circulated within the same textual networks as the *Awntyrs*; the London scribe of Lambeth 491a produced copies of these two poems in the early-fifteenth century, as discussed in the following chapter. Another version of *Troilus and Criseyde* can also be found in London manuscript Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 61. It has been suggested that this manuscript belonged to Anne Neville (d. 1480), the fourth-born daughter of Joan Neville.²⁹ This manuscript also contains the famous frontispiece of Chaucer reading to a gathered audience. This image presents what is now considered by scholars to be a highly fictionalised representation of Chaucer's audience. Rather than the courtly audience of men and women gathered together to listen to a romance depicted in the Corpus Christi manuscript, Paul Strohm has argued that Chaucer's audience was more typically found in male members of the gentry and urban officials, those of similar rank and status to the author himself and the scribes mentioned above.³⁰ More recently, scholars have complicated this view to include a recognition of sub-cultures of readers, Felicity Riddy and Nicola McDonald both reading Chaucer's works

²⁹ Karen K. Jambeck, 'Patterns of Women's Literary Patronage: England, 1200-ca. 1475', *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. by June Hall McCash (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 228-65 (p. 241).

³⁰ See: Strohm, 'Chaucer's Audience(s)', pp. 140-45.

for their implied female audiences and relation to actual audiences of women.³¹ The fictional audience presented within *Troilus and Criseyde* of Criseyde and her female companions collectively listening to the ‘romaunce...of Thebes’ is a moment of metafiction frequently cited both as evidence of women’s literary practice and as an example of a highly fictionalised construct of audience.³² The poem *Troilus and Criseyde* presents women engaging with text in a multitude of ways: engaged in a collective listening to a narrated text; silent collective reading from the page; and a retelling of the tale that has been heard and read to a newly configured audience. This provides an interesting parallel to the *Awntyrs*, which, although it contains a much less explicit description of female engagement with text, nevertheless similarly presents women as narrators and storytellers, allowing us to reconsider women as transmitters of text. In the *Awntyrs*, the ghost becomes narrator to recount a recognisable episode from the poem’s source text, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. Gaynour similarly recounts her ghostly encounter to the royal hunting party upon her return to court, introducing a third narrative voice. These fictional modes of literary engagement recognise women as performers of romance.

In Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, the heroine is found by her uncle Pandarus within a paved parlour, accompanied by two other ladies. All of them are seated listening to a maiden read the siege of Thebes:

Whan he was come unto his neces place,
 "Wher is my lady?" to hire folk quod he;
 And they hym tolde, and he forth in gan pace,
 And fond two othere ladys sete and she,
 Withinne a paved parlour, and they thre
 Herden a mayden reden hem the geste
 Of the siege of Thebes, while hem leste.

³¹ See: Riddy, “‘Women talking about the things of God’”; McDonald, ‘Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*’.

³² Sarah McNamer, ‘Lyrics and Romances’, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women’s Writing*, ed. by Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 195-209 (p. 202).

(T&C Book II, 78-84)³³

The physical object of the book is referred to several times, as her uncle first apologises for disturbing her and then asks her what the book is:

"But I am sory that I have yow let
To herken of youre book ye preysen thus.
For Goddes love, what seith it? telle it us!
Is it of love? O, som good ye me leere!
"Uncle," quod she, " youre maistresse is nat here."

With that thei gonne laughe, and tho she seyde,
"This romaunce is of Thebes that we rede;
And we han herd how that kyng Layus deyde
Thorough Edippus his sone, and al that dede;
And here we stynten at thise lettres rede -
How the bisshop, as the book kan telle,
Amphiorax, fil thorough the ground to helle."

Quod Pandarus, "Al this knowe I myselve,
And al th'assege of Thebes and the care;
For herof ben ther maked bookes twelve.
[...]

(T&C Book II, 94-108)

Pandarus requests Criseyde to 'telle' to him what the book is, whether it is of love, or an instructional text that she can teach him. This identifies at least two genres of text as being associated with women's reading. The reading practice of the four women collectively 'preysen' the one book is contrasted to Pandarus's own engagement with the literature, as he states that he has knowledge of twelve books of 'thassege of Thebes', perhaps representing gendered differences in access to and use of texts. The ladies' 'preysen' of the text further functions to fetishize the physical book as an object of devotion. Chaucer not only constructs a metafiction, the characters within *Troilus and Criseyde* having knowledge of a real textual tradition that exists outside of the narrative, but also presents different gendered experiences with this text.

³³ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 471-585. All subsequent references to this edition.

It is likely that Chaucer expected his audience of *Troilus and Criseyde* to recognise the different ways his characters engaged with text in the poem. Criseyde's response presents a gendered way of engaging with text, one in which the acts of reading, listening and speaking are considered interrelated textual activities. Criseyde describes the women's engagement with the romance as a collective experience: from 'that we rede' (*T&C* Book II, 100) to 'we han herd' (*T&C* Book II, 101), and 'we stynten at thise lettres rede' (*T&C* Book II, 103). Chaucer constructs an act of "reading" for these women that encompasses many different modes of engaging with text, as Criseyde describes how she and her companions, at a key point in the romance of Thebes, 'stynten at thise lettres rede' (*T&C* Book II, 103). The word 'stynten' meaning to pause in narration or to stop speaking, suggesting that at the climactic part of the text – as the bishop falls to hell – the women stop the maiden's oral recitation of the poem to read the actual words written on the page in a moment distinct from the text being read aloud.³⁴ This presents the women actively reading as well as listening to the text, Criseyde showing her knowledge of the text and emphasising the use of the book to maintain a hierarchy that places the legitimacy of the written word above an oral account. Criseyde recounts all of this to her uncle in a re-telling of the tale she has just heard, but for which the actual audiences of *Troilus and Criseyde* were not present. In this way, Criseyde performs as the narrator to the newly configured audience, consisting now of Pandarus within the text and the actual audience of *Troilus and Criseyde*. Chaucer thus constructs both a fictional audience of women listening to the romance of Thebes and a frame for Criseyde to become the narrator of this tale to both a fictional and actual audience. This act of speech is a written representation of a fictionalised oral transmission of text, one that is still reliant upon and deeply connected to the physical

³⁴ "'Stinten (v.)", 1a: (b) to stop talking, weeping, or singing, pause in speech or narration; remain silent; of sound: stop; **ben stinted**, of a voice: become quiet', in *MED*.

book, which also speaks: ‘as the book kan telle’ (*T&C* Book II, 104). Thus, the act of speech is conceptually tied to the physical object which contains the written word.

The poem of *Troilus and Criseyde* may likewise be read aloud, therefore making this written account of oral narration a speech-act once more to a newly configured and enlarged audience. Thus, the female engagement with romance presented by the poem, though often used as a passing reference to support arguments for women’s reading of romance, is more complex than women existing as passive members of a listening audience. Rather, in this moment of metafiction, Chaucer constructs an example of women as readers, listeners and transmitters of text, all centred around the use of a physical book. Though multiple ways of engaging with text are presented, women in this passage are most intimately connected with the act of speaking a romance, both through the maiden who is narrating the romance of Thebes and through Criseyde’s recounting of their experience with the book. This is a fictional representation of women engaging with text, functioning to provide a warning to Pandarus – one which is most effective when the actual audience is also aware of its implication. The text of the siege of Thebes serves as an example to Pandarus as Criseyde indeed attempts to teach him through her retelling, a lesson he does not heed, despite ironically stating ‘al this knowe I my selue’ (*T&C* Book II, 106). Since the reconfigured audience Criseyde narrates to consists however, of both Pandarus and the actual audience of the poem, the romance of Thebes functions on multiple levels: reminding the actual audience of the related poem and its moral lessons; emphasising its significance to the current text being read; and prefiguring the plot to follow. It is through this metafiction that the dramatic irony characteristic of Chaucer’s work is constructed. Its effectiveness, however, rests on the audience’s own literary knowledge, suggesting that the audience for whom Chaucer writes is well-versed in romance.

The typical fictional audience of Arthurian romance is most compellingly represented in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The narrator, having positioned Arthur in the chronicle history, promises to tell their fictional audience a wonderful tale: ‘Forthi an aunter in erde I attle to schawe, | That a selly in sight summe men hit holden, | And an outrage awenture of Arthures wonderes.’ (SGGK 27-29).³⁵ The scene of Arthur at New Year is then described, with the king refusing to eat until he has been entertained:

That he thurgh nobelay had nomen he wolde never ete
 Upon such a dere day, er hym devised were
 Of sum aventurus thyng an uncouth tale,
 Of sum mayn mervayle that he myght trawe,
 Of alderes, of armes, of other aventurus;
(SGGK 91-95)

The poet here imagines the text performed at a celebration, the household’s entertainment part of the Christmas festivities. The king’s refusal to eat is the commencement of a game. The audience’s participation is required as they recognise this trope, immediately expecting a marvel to appear, as indeed it does in the form of the ‘aghlich mayster’ (SGGK 136), the Green Knight, who appears on cue to respond to Arthur’s challenge. Rather than present someone performing a tale, a ‘mayn mervayle’ arrives at the door of the king’s hall to perform itself. The expected reception context is thus written into the text, with the narrative frame providing a fictionalised example of how a romance is to be read. Christine Chism describes this feature as hyperpoetic, a text which is simultaneously oral and written, addressing both listeners and readers to engage with as wide an audience as possible.³⁶ In this way, the narrator brings the Green Knight to the doorway of any lord who, like Arthur, demands to be entertained at the dinner table.

³⁵ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Cleanness, Patience*, ed. by J.J. Anderson (London: Everyman, 2005), pp. 167-278.

³⁶ Chism, *Alliterative Revivals*, pp. 37-38.

The *Gawain*-poet uses metafiction to imply that women were an active audience of romance. Similar to the joke in the Nun's Priest's Tale that 'the boke of Launcelot de Lake [...wommen holde in ful greet reverence', Lady Bertilak in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* reveals herself and her female companions to be fans of the fictional Sir Gawain and his many conquests.³⁷ During Lady Bertilak's seduction of Gawain in the bedroom scenes of *Passus III*, Gawain's initial refusal to kiss Lady Bertilak is met by her disappointment that the knight fails to live up to his literary reputation:

“Bot that ye be Gawan, hit gos not in mynde.”
 “Querfore?” quoth the freke, and freschly he askes,
 [...]
 “So god as Gawayn gaynly is halden,
 And cortaysye is closed so clene in hymselfen,
 Couth not lyghtly haf lenged so long wyth a lady
 Bot he had craved a cosse, bi his courtaysye,
 Bi sum towch of summe tryfle at sum tales ende.”

(SGGK 1293-1301)

The lady claims that he cannot be Gawain, since the Gawain she knows would have 'craved a cosse' by the 'tales end', and yet he has not done so. This functions as a flirtation, both with Gawain and with the actual audience of the poem. Lady Bertilak's reference to the wider corpus of texts where Gawain is known for his romantic actions is a wink to the readers who may, like Lady Bertilak, be expecting Gawain to perform this role. Gawain's initial coy, pious response to the lady's advances, crossing himself as he cowers under the sheets, is only emphasised by the comparison to his other, more romantic self, in what has been described as a subversion of gender by Geraldine Heng.³⁸ It is only when his literary reputation has been challenged that Gawain then concedes to give the lady a kiss. Significant to this study is the poet's explicit reference

³⁷ Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Nun's Priest's Tale', *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Riverside Chaucer* ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 253-61 (p. 258, l. 4402-03).

³⁸ Geraldine Heng, 'A Woman Wants: The Lady, *Gawain*, and the Forms of Seduction', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 5.3 (1992), 101-34; Geraldine Heng, 'Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *PMLA*, 106.3 (1991), 500-14.

to Lady Bertilak's knowledge of this wider literary tradition. As Thomas Hahn has observed, 'The peculiar appeal of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* rests largely on Gawain's profound familiarity among audiences in medieval Britain, and this renown in turn derived its source and substance from a cluster of popular English Gawain romances'.³⁹ However, what the poem presents in this explicit moment of metafiction is specifically Gawain's profound familiarity among audiences of women. About a dozen romances that feature Gawain as hero survive in manuscripts from the fifteenth and sixteenth century.⁴⁰ The nature of their survival suggests that they were widely circulated and consumed, confirmed by numerous intertextual references and several inventory entries, including that in the Paston's list of books.⁴¹ The lack of surviving copies makes it hard to identify specific audiences for these poems, but Lady Bertilak more than implies that women made up at least part of this audience.

Compared to the vignette Chaucer paints of Criseyde seated among her ladies in a paved parlour and the lords and ladies of King Arthur's court during a New Year's feast described by the *Gawain*-poet, the fictional audience presented in the *Awntyrs* offers little insight to the imagined collection of people gathered to listen to the 'aunter' (*Awntyrs* 1). A fictional audience is never so explicitly constructed, nor a metafiction explicitly introduced. The narrative frame is relatively simple by comparison. The first five stanzas set the scene of the royal hunt, before the poem switches to a first-person perspective, as if the narrator is present at the scene. At the crucial part in the text, prior to the description of the figure of the ghost, the narrator takes two lines to introduce the 'marvaile':

³⁹ Thomas Hahn, 'Gawain and Popular Chivalric Romance in Britain', *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. by Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 218-34 (p. 222).

⁴⁰ For a list of these Gawain romances, see: Newstead, 'Arthurian Legends' (pp. 53-4).

⁴¹ 'The Inventory of Englysshe Boks off John [Paston]' (c. 1470s), in *The Paston Letters A.D. 1422-1509: New Complete Library Edition*, 6 vols, ed. by James Gairdner (London and Exeter: Chatto and Windus, 1904), vol. 6, item 987.

And þis mekel mervaille þat I shal of mene
 Now wol I of þis mervaille mele if I mote

(*Awntyrs* 73-74)

The first-person perspective is emphasised through the personal pronoun “I”, used three times within these two lines, connected to acts of speech and to narration: ‘I shal of mene’ and ‘mele if I mote’. On two other occasions, the narrator draws attention to themselves as storyteller, interrupting at the moments of climax in both episodes, making all aware of their presence. The narrator thus verbally breaks into the action of the story in what is a fictionalised construction of a lively and improvised performance, such as at line 121: ‘To telle þe todes þere-one my tonge were fulle tere’ in which the narrator draws attention to the long and densely alliterated description of the ghost’s gruesome corpse which has come just before it, the interjecting line itself making a joke of the performer’s tired tongue through a line that is likewise excessively alliterated. Similarly, at line 615, the narrator reveals themselves to be a supporter of Gawain in his fight against his opponent, interrupting at the most dramatic moment of their fight-scene: ‘But him [Galeron] lymped þe worse and þat me wel likes.’ These interjections are shown to be those of a fictionalised, constructed narrator through the stability of these lines across all four surviving texts. Rather than representing actual improvisations of a narrator (or additions by individual scribes) the interjections demonstrate an attempt by the poet to place the narrator more consciously as a character within the poem. As such, the poem suggests its use as a performance text, expected to be both read and recited, received by a collective audience, perhaps engaged with in a way not dissimilar to the way that Criseyde and her ladies read romance, or performed at a feast, as in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Despite its comparatively simple opening, the *Awntyrs* nevertheless introduces an episode sophisticated in its intertextuality, engaging as it does self-consciously with the wider Arthurian corpus to re-tell the story of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*,

successfully heightening its dramatic effect and reinforcing the central moral instruction. In the *Awntyrs*, the prophecy of King Arthur's downfall is told by the ghost to Sir Gawain and Dame Gaynour (*Awntyrs* 264-312). This is a retelling of the final battle of Arthur and his knights as told in *Awntyrs'* source text, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.⁴² It is only in the ghost's prophecy that specific instances of the poem's indebtedness to the alliterative *Morte Arthure* can be found: the description of Mordred's heraldic device (*Awntyrs* 307: CP AMA 4182); the reference to the French knights Frolo and Feraunt (*Awntyrs* 275: CP AMA 3404); the reference to Arthur's discovery of his treason in Tuscany (*Awntyrs* 291: CP AMA 3586); and lastly, the details of Gawain's death, that he shall 'In a slake...be slayne' (*Awntyrs* 298. CP: AMA 3719).⁴³ Though a metafiction is never explicit, in that the characters within the *Awntyrs* have no knowledge of the text they are being told, the episode goes beyond being merely referential. The *Awntyrs* poet uses recognisable narrative conventions to introduce the prophecy of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, communicating to both the fictional and actual audience that it is a retelling of an existing text, reframed to be spoken by a woman, a re-gendering that is significant to the function of both the prophecy and the overall narrative. Furthermore, the ignorance of the characters is determined by the *Awntyrs'* temporal framework and necessary for the poem to effectively deliver its core message, as has been argued previously by Leah Haught.⁴⁴ Although, unlike *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* discussed above, the *Awntyrs* does not construct a metafiction, it is nevertheless self-consciously intertextual and thus explicitly communicated by the author (and arguably, its

⁴² *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. Benson. All references to this edition.

⁴³ For a detailed explanation of the shared details between the *Awntyrs* and the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, see: *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, pp. 26-29.

⁴⁴ Haught, 'Ghostly Mothers' pp. 3-24.

subsequent producers) to an imagined audience with a knowledge of the alliterative *Morte*.

In the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, the prophecy of the king's downfall is framed as a dream narrative: King Arthur, upon falling asleep, has a dream of Lady Fortune and her wheel (AMA 3218-3455). The entire vision is retold by King Arthur to his philosophers upon waking, who then interpret the dream as Arthur's fate:

"Freke," says the philosopher, "thy fortune is passed,
 For thou shall find her thy fo; fraist when thee likes!
 Thou art at the highest, I hete thee forsooth;
 Challenge now when thou will, thou cheves no more!
 Thou has shed much blood and shalkes destroyed,
 Sakeles, in surquidrie, in sere kinges landes;
 Shrive thee of thy shame and shape for thine end.
 Thou has a shewing, Sir King, take keep yif thee like,
 For thou shall fersly fall within five winters.
 Found abbeyes in Fraunce, the fruites are thine owen,
 For Frolle and for Feraunt and for thir fers knightes
 That thou fremedly in Fraunce has fey beleved.
 Take keep yet of other kinges, and cast in thine herte,
 That were conquerours kidd and crowned in erthe.

(AMA 3394-3407)

The philosophers interpret the dream with dramatic fervour, reprimanding the king for what they describe as violent acts – violence with which the audience is familiar, having just read of the king's increasing cruelty. In Arthur's own account of the dream he describes himself as entirely passive, the agency given over to Lady Fortune. In contrast, the philosophers directly place blame on the king through a repetition of the pronoun 'thou'. The bloodshed and destruction wrought by Arthur's active campaigns is deliberately spoken: 'Thou has shed much blood and shalkes destroyed | Sakeles, in surquidrie, in sere kinges landes' (AMA 3398-99). The variation of the typical *aa/ax* pattern in line 3398 lays added emphasis on the un-alliterated 'blood'. These lines both feature a double-alliterated structural stress: the 'd' in 'shed', 'blood' and 'destroyed' and the 'k' of 'shalke', 'sakeles' and 'kings' gives a vehemence to the philosophers' exegesis as they describe the actions of the king with a torrent of continuous '-s'

alliterated stresses, building to the warning that the king should ‘Shrive thee of thy shame and shape for thine end’ (AMA 3400), returning to the repeated use of pronoun and terminal ‘d’ found in line 3398. The philosophers thus urge the king to confess his sins, advising him later to ‘meekly ask mercy for meed of thy soul’ (AMA 3455), placing further penitential emphasis on this passage. The sentiments of this passage reverberate in the *Awntyrs*, which dwells on the penitential, the core agent of this penitence being the revived corpse of queen Gaynour’s mother.

Reference to pre-existing, known texts had become a pervasive feature of romance generally and Arthurian romance specifically by the time of the *Awntyrs*’ composition in c. 1424-25. As Norris J. Lacy has argued, ‘Arthurian literature constitutes an enormous, overarching cycle, each part of which is intended to be read against a background of all others’.⁴⁵ Yet the prophecy of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* is not simply in the background of the *Awntyrs* but written into the text in a self-conscious retelling delivered by Gaynour’s mother. The author of the *Awntyrs* abridges the prophecy and places it in the voice of the ghost, who delivers it to Gawain, rather than to the king:

"Your king is to couetous, I warne þe sir knizte,
 May no mane stry him withe strength while his whele stondes;
 Whane he is in his mageste, moost in his mizte,
 He shal lighte ful lowe one þe se sondes.
 [Thus zoure cheualrous kynge] chef shalle [a] chaunce;
 [False Fortune] in fighte,
 [That wondirfulle whele wryghte],
 Shalle make lordes [lowe] to lizte-
 Take witesse by Fraunce.

(*Awntyrs* 265-73)

The ghost condemns the king for his sins, the sins for which the philosophers in the *Morte* similarly encourage him to confess. The ghost refers to Fortune’s wheel ‘while

⁴⁵ Norris J. Lacy, *Text and Intertext in Medieval Arthurian Literature* (New York: Garland, 1996), p. vii.

his whele stondes' (*Awntyrs* 266) and names Fortune as 'False' (*Awntyrs* 270) just as the philosophers in the *Morte* name her Arthur's 'fo' (*AMA* 3395). The ghost even speaks with knowledge of '[That wondirfulle whele wryghte]' (*Awntyrs* 271) in a line that is reminiscent of the lengthy description of the awesome figure of Fortune, as described by Arthur in the *Morte* (*AMA* 3250-3261). The prominent ninth line of the stanza '[Thus zoure cheualrous kynge] chef shalle [a] chaunce' (*Awntyrs* 269) places specific emphasis on the accomplishments of the 'cheualrous kynge', referencing his military prowess past and future, in a line that, through its similarity of alliteration and syntax, is suggestive of the warning delivered by the philosophers to the king in the *Morte*: 'Challenge now when thou will, thou cheves no more!' (*AMA* 3397). The ninth line then rhymes 'chaunce' with the poet's specific reference to the king's conquests in France: 'Take witness by Fraunce' (*Awntyrs* 273), instructing Gaynour and Gawain to recall the earlier conquests of King Arthur whilst simultaneously instructing the actual audience to recall earlier written chronicles and poems of these same conquests, this line featuring in the prominent final line of the stanza's wheel. This would suggest that the poet of *Awntyrs* is self-consciously referencing the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, situating itself temporally after the king's conquests in France but before the challenge from Rome to give the audience an insight into the court and the characters whilst Arthur is 'moost in his mizte'. A.C. Spearing has argued that Fortune's wheel is built into the structure of the *Awntyrs*, featuring King Arthur seated in majesty in the very centre of the poem.⁴⁶ The movement of the wheel can also arguably be read at a stanzaic level, with the rise and fall of the poem's metre. It is in the following three stanzas, after the ghost's reference to France, that all the direct textual references to the alliterative *Morte Arthure* (detailed above) can be found. The references to the *Morte* are succinct and follow in quick succession, serving almost as a textual shorthand, the poet clearly

⁴⁶ Spearing, 'Central and Displaced Sovereignty', pp. 250-52.

expecting their audience to have knowledge of the earlier text. The poet capitalises on this pre-existing knowledge, as William Matthews has suggested, to purposefully position the poem as a prequel to the earlier *Morte*.⁴⁷

The poet uses recognisable narrative devices to construct the intertextual retelling of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* within the *Awntyrs*. The first narrator frames the entire poem as a written account, introducing the tale in a highly conventional way, one that is familiar to readers of Arthurian romance: the narrative is first placed in history, as in the reign of King Arthur; the tale is then legitimised by its written status before a more specific courtly scene is introduced, as in the hunt which begins the *Awntyrs*:

In the tyme of Arthur ane aunter by-tydde
By þe Turnewathelane - as þe boke telles -
Whane he to Carlele was comen, [that] conquerour kydde,
Withe dukes and dussiperes þat with þe dere dwelles,
To hunte at þe herdes þat longe had bene hydde.

(*Awntyrs* 1-5)

The reference to a physical book suggests a fictionalised audience familiar with the written histories and romances of Arthur and potentially familiar with the collective listening of texts from books, whilst simultaneously fetishizing the existence of an original codex, one that preserves an ‘authentic’ account. The narrator’s knowledge of this book then functions to legitimise their oral retelling of the poem. Within these first five lines, the reference to the book is the only line not to have all stressed syllables alliterated: the word ‘boke’ itself is spoken with greater emphasis. As in *Troilus and Criseyde* this book also speaks: ‘as the boke telles’ (*Awntyrs* 2) and thus the written word and physical object are related to the more ephemeral act of speaking. The opening lines also introduce Arthur as ‘[that] conquerour kydde’ (*Awntyrs* 3), at once a

⁴⁷ William Matthews also makes this argument, as quoted in Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 135.

formulaic alliterative phrase and a direct verbal echo of the prophecy in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, where the philosophers counsel the king to ‘Take keep yet of other kinges...| That were conquerours kidd’ (AMA 3406-7), before identifying all of the figures of his dream as the Nine Worthies.⁴⁸ This places the *Awntyrs* within the direct context of the *Morte*, potentially signifying the text as belonging to the textual tradition of the Nine Worthies before the poem has even properly begun. This reframing functions to add depth to the queen’s character, placing her and her mother in the textual tradition not only of the *memento mori*, but also of the Nine Worthies. Indeed, the ghost delivers a speech that Helen Phillips has argued ‘could easily come from one of the speeches from past kings on Fortune’s Wheel in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*’.⁴⁹ Although Phillips does not consider the re-gendering of the dead royal as significant, I would argue that the gender dynamics performed through the text are significantly altered when the text is given a female voice: the role of women as storytellers, the association of female sexuality with acts of speech and the embedded religious teachings are all made more powerful through a female ownership of the text’s central narrative voice. That women were interested in the Nine Worthies is evidenced by Cecily Neville (d. 1495), Duchess of York and daughter of Joan Neville. Cecily owned numerous tapestries, including one of the Wheel of Fortune. She is further known to have had spiritual works read aloud and collectively discussed within her household.⁵⁰ The extensive literary activities of Cecily were potentially learned from her mother’s own practices of engaging with literature. Joan Neville is recorded as having owned a copy of *Godfrey de Bouillon*, a text relating to the First King of Jerusalem who is represented in the alliterative *Morte Arthure* as the last of the Nine Worthies and third

⁴⁸ The figures of the Nine Worthies also feature in the alliterative poem *The Parlement of Thre Ages*. The figures represented are: Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Joshua, David, Judas Maccabeus, King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon.

⁴⁹ Phillips, ‘Structure and Meaning’, p. 76.

⁵⁰ Jambeck, ‘Patterns of Women’s Literary Patronage’, p. 240.

Christian King to feature in Arthur's dream of the Wheel of Fortune.⁵¹ Both Joan and Cecily Neville were therefore engaging with the texts and traditions represented in the *Awntyrs*, suggesting in the very least that the poem would not have been out of place within the wider cultural environment of the Neville women.

In the ghost's retelling of the *Morte* prophecy, conventional assertions of truth used elsewhere by the principal narrator of the poem, such as 'þe trouthe for to telle' (34) and 'soþely to say' (693), are also employed by the poet here to legitimise the ghost as narrator and identify the intertextual status of her speech:

Suche ferlies shulle fal, witthoute eny fable,
Vppone Cornewayle coost withe a knyghte kene.
Sir Arthur þe [auenaunt, honest] and able,
Shal be wounded, I-wys, woþely, I wene.

[...]

He beris hit of sable, soþely to say;
In riche Arthures halle,
The barne playes at þe balle
Pat outray shalle you alle,
[Fulle derfely] þat day.

(*Awntyrs* 300-12)

Phrases such as 'withoute eny fable', 'woþely, I wene' and 'soþely to say' are used in close succession to emphasise both the truthfulness and significance of the prophecy. The use of this narrative strategy serves not only to legitimise the role of the ghost as narrator, but to signify to the audience of the *Awntyrs* that another tale is being told, one with which they are expected to be familiar. That at least some audiences were familiar with multiple Arthurian texts is supported in the manuscript survival for the *Awntyrs*. Lincoln MS 91, which belonged to the Thornton household and is dated to c. 1430-40, contained both the alliterative *Morte* and the *Awntyrs*, as well as a third Arthurian romance, *Sir Percevalle des Galles*. In the very least, this would suggest that within the

⁵¹ *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. Benson, lines 3340-47.

reception contexts of this codex, that is within the Thornton household, the actual audience of the *Awntyrs* would have been aware of the intertextual relations so self-consciously written into the *Awntyrs* narrative.⁵²

The first episode of the *Awntyrs* concludes with Gaynour recounting the ‘aunter’ to the court. She thus becomes the narrator of the text the audience has just heard, one that shows Gaynour to be engaging, like her mother, in an act of retelling:

And al þe rialle route to þe quene rides,
She sayes hem þe selcouþes þat þei hadde þer seene-
The wise [on swilke wondirs] for-wondred þey were.

(*Awntyrs* 332-34)

The emphasis here is not on Gaynour recounting what she had been told, but on what she had seen. It also presents a newly configured fictional audience within the poem, one that hears the retelling of the tale the actual audience has just experienced, a retelling from which the actual audience is now excluded. Leah Haught has argued that ‘[t]he economy with which Gaynour summarizes her supernatural encounter...effectively complete[s] the systematic silencing of feminine discourse’.⁵³ However, this exclusion leaves space for interpretation of how Gaynour recounted her meeting with her dead mother; whether she heeded the spiritual instruction given to her and shared this with the court. The emphasis on what she ‘hadde þer seene’ may suggest that the queen focused more on the description of the grisly ghost’s appearance, much as the principal narrator of the poem does, perhaps recounting the events much in the same way the actual audiences of the *Awntyrs* experienced it – through the first-person perspective of the narrator. The actual reader/listeners of the poem do not need another full account of the experience, especially as they may have already encountered the prophecy it contains in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. Though it denies the audience the

⁵² For further discussion of this manuscript, see Ch. 4.3 ‘Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91’.

⁵³ Haught, ‘Ghostly Mothers’, p. 14.

opportunity to know Gaynour's own interpretation of the experience, the ambiguity that is created from this economy could function to allow audiences to negotiate the encounter for themselves; the silencing of Gaynor is also the silencing of the poet, effectively creating space for audience expression and giving way to subversive rather than prescriptive reading. Moreover, Gaynour is presented as a third narrative voice, a woman actively engaged in the oral transmission of text who is listened to avidly by her audience; 'for-wondred þey were' (*Awntyrs* 334).

The future actions of both Gawain and Gaynour are foreshadowed, the related moral teachings made more powerful, precisely because the characters are ignorant of their future sins. The dramatic irony constructed through the *Morte* prophecy creates a sophisticated narrative reliant on its audience's familiarity with Arthurian romance. As Leah Haught has argued, '[a]ny specific association of Guenevere with dangerously disruptive sexuality must be made by audiences already familiar with the larger Arthurian corpus'.⁵⁴ The infidelity that reader/listeners know Gaynour commits in the alliterative *Morte Arthure* is implied through the physical warning her mother brings, but its significance is elevated by its direct association with the earlier text, especially as the usurper Mordred is represented in the *Awntyrs* as an innocent child that 'playes at þe balle' (*Awntyrs* 310), thereby placing added blame onto Gaynour. Similarly, Gawain's violence in the latter half of the *Awntyrs* is made senseless by the ghost's prophecy, as both he and the reader have knowledge that his life is not in danger, knowing that he will die 'Vppone Cornewayle coost' (*Awntyrs* 301) rather than in Inglewood forest at the hands of Sir Geleron. Helen Phillips has argued that although the ghost's gender is significant it should not 'eclipse response to the fact that she functions also as a dead royal: equivalent to one of the crowned skeletons who meet their living similitudes in

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

memento mori works like *Three Dead Kings*'.⁵⁵ However, it is the re-gendering of these existing textual traditions that makes the *Awntyrs* particularly captivating and it bears further discussion. The poet's blending of these intertextual relations, explicitly rewriting the prophecy of the alliterative *Morte* whilst incorporating the traditions of the *Trental of St Gregory* and *Three Dead Kings*, shows that a rich textual background informed both the *Awntyrs* and, by extension, also informed the audience of this poem. *The Trental of St Gregory* was read by the same audiences as those consuming Middle English romance, four of its ten extant copies compiled alongside romances, as in London, BL, MS Cotton Caligula A.II; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. A.1 (the Vernon manuscript); London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 306; and NLS, Advocates, MS 19.3.1 (the Heege MS). It has been argued by A. I. Doyle and Felicity Riddy that the Vernon manuscript was most likely compiled for a community of female readers, Riddy stating that '[t]he Vernon manuscript seems to provide substantial evidence for the existence of a certain kind of female readership [...]The book contains a strikingly large number of works written specifically for women readers'.⁵⁶ That the *Trental* was printed three times in the early sixteenth-century attests to its popularity.⁵⁷ That the prophecy of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* is both performed and interpreted by a woman, that the dead royal who visits their living counterpart is a woman, and that the mother-son relationship of the *Trental* has been shifted to represent a more intimate mother-daughter one, is significant. The extensive re-gendering affects how the *Awntyrs* was engaged with by its audience, particularly as the author has given the women of *Awntyrs* a voice and a function that is unique to this poem, not found elsewhere in Arthurian romance.

⁵⁵ Phillips, 'Structure and Meaning', p. 75.

⁵⁶ Riddy, "'Women talking about the things of God'", p. 106.

⁵⁷ *Life of St Gregory's Mother* (London: Richard Pynson, 1501(?)), STC 12351; *Life of St Gregory's Mother* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1515), STC 1235; *Life of St Gregory's Mother* (London: John Mychell, 1532(?)), STC 12353.

3.2 Speaking of Sex

The *Awntyrs* is, for the most part, a dialogue between two women: mother and daughter, corpse and queen, in a more complex presentation of female character than any other surviving Arthurian romance of the same period. This conversation provides practical spiritual guidance that combines both the Seven Corporal and Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, delivered with guidance on womanly virtues and warnings against sexual sin. These function together to provide an example to both Gaynour and the implied audience of this poem, who is by extension also female. The physical appearance of the ghost has been the focus of much scholarly attention.⁵⁸ Yet, in the poem, the female sex is defined through acts of speech. The ghost has more dialogue than any other character which, coupled with the description of her ghastly appearance, makes up the majority of the first half – at 190 of the 338 lines, a huge 56%, compared to the 60 lines dedicated to the description of the king's hunt; 50 lines description or direct speech of Queen Gaynour; and just 30 lines dedicated to the description or direct speech of Gawain.⁵⁹ The narrator is the first to speak, and does so for the first 77 lines, before describing the ghost, who then makes her voice heard, before Gaynour is introduced, mirroring the noise made by the ghost, her mother. The central theme, the relationship between mother and daughter, is firmly established and interwoven into the very structure of the poem. The speech of the anonymous lover of Sir Galeron introduces the action of the poem's second episode, her shriek and speech to the queen then bringing this action to a halt, as the queen relays the maiden's plea for mercy to the king, performing the familiar role of intercessory queen.⁶⁰ Thus, the action is determined by the speech-acts of these three women, who between them: ghost, queen

⁵⁸ See discussion of literature in Ch.1.1 'Locating *The Awntyrs Arthure* in Scholarship'.

⁵⁹ These calculations are made from the lines as presented in *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates.

⁶⁰ Paul Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), especially 'Queens as Intercessors', pp. 95-119.

and maiden, also serve to represent women in three different stages of life. This relates the poem to other alliterative traditions, such as *The Parlement of The Thre Ages* and *Three Dead Kings*.⁶¹ The *Awntyrs* intersects boundaries in a multitude of ways; its rich textual and cultural interactions demonstrate its potential to be read by women across the social spectrum, as equally likely to be received within female religious communities as aristocratic and mercantile households, the poem constructs an imagined literary community of women, speaking to their collective gender identity as the text deconstructs and then reaffirms conventional models of gendered-behaviour.

The speech of women dominates the poem: 209 lines of dialogue are dedicated to female characters, whereas just 97 lines are spoken by the male characters:

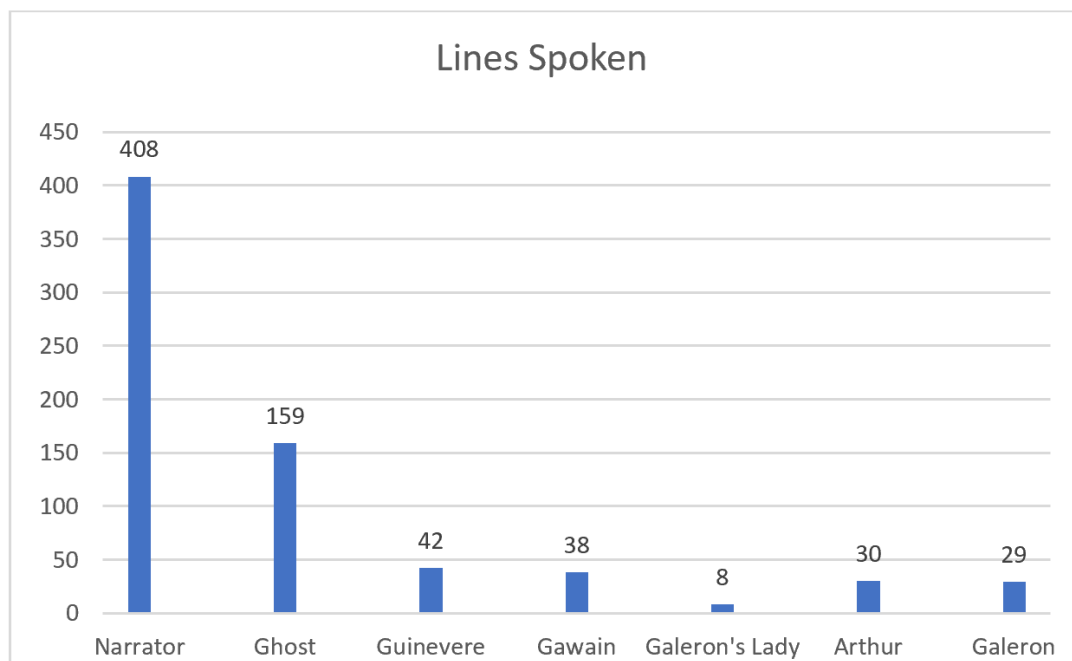


Figure 3.1: Table showing the distribution of dialogue in *The Awntyrs off Arthure* (Gates ed. 1969)

The amount of dialogue spoken by the female characters corresponds to their age and experience, varying enormously, whereas the men of Arthur's court all speak a

⁶¹ It should also be noted that *The Parlement of The Thre Ages* survives in London, BL, MS Additional 31042, one of the two manuscripts compiled by Robert Thornton in c. 1430-50. The text thus shares a scribe with the *Awntyrs*.

relatively equal amount. Though Galeron's Lady speaks just 8 lines, her speech takes place in two significant places of the poem, each time presented in the wheel of the stanza following the same syntax and rhyme. Furthermore, another 19 lines of the poem are dedicated to the description of the female characters "making noise". This "making noise" I include in my reading of a speech-act, as the noises made by the women in the text are often presented as gendered behaviours; weeping, howling and sighing, for example, and function to further align the characters to their gender.

The physical description of the ghost offers no indication of her gender:

There come [a lau oute of a loghe - in lede] is not to layne -
 [In the lyknes of Lucyfere, layetheste in helle]-
 And glides to Sir Gawayne, þe gates to gayne,
 zauland and zomerand with many [a lowd zelle].
 Hit zaules, hit zameres, with [wonges ful] wete,
 And seid withe siking sare:
 "I bane þe body me bare;
 Alas! now kindeles my care,
 I gloppen and I grete!"

Then gloppenet and grete [Dame] Gaynour þe gay,
 [...]

(*Awntyrs* 83-92)

Before the ghost speaks, it is referred to only as 'hit', the gender not revealed to the audience until the ghost curses her suffering body; "'I ban þe body me bare...'. Her first words function to curse that she was ever born, curse her body as it now suffers and curse her motherhood. She speaks with a soul-sickening sigh 'siking sare'; she despairs 'gloppen'; and she weeps 'grete', now that she is forsaken by the child she bore; 'kindeles my care'. The opening words of the ghost therefore connect three generations of mothers together, joined by their collective bodily suffering: past, present and future. This echoes the three generations of male kings typically depicted in the visual tradition of *The Three Living and The Three Dead*, likewise represented in the poetic version of this popular legend, *Three Dead Kings*, a poem which shares the same rhyme scheme as

the *Awntyrs*, as observed by Thorlac Turville-Petre.⁶² The re-gendering of this tradition is reinforced by its construction of womanhood as fixed to a woman's role as mother and to the act of childbirth. It is only once she has spoken that the narrator then begins to use the female pronouns of 'hir' and 'ho' to refer to the ghost. Furthermore, the ghost can be identified as a woman through the noise that she makes, her howling, yammering and sighing all carrying gendered connotations and mirrored in the reaction of her daughter in the first line of the next stanza, the concatenation that connects the two stanzas also functioning to parallel the two women, reinforcing the *memento mori* message of the ghost's warning to Gaynour and further emphasising the mother-daughter relationship as Gaynour also 'gloppenet and grete'.

The connection of the female gender to speech is significant, as the ghost reveals her main reason for appearing is to speak: 'I ame comene in þis cace | To speke with your quene' (142-43). It is then the ghost who describes her physical living self as she reveals to the queen that she too, was once a young and beautiful woman, before delivering her warning to Gaynour:

After Gaynour þe gay Sir Gawyne is gone,
 [And to þat body hase he broghte that birde so bryghte].
 "Welcome Waynour, I-wis, worthi in wone,
 Lo! how delful dethe has þi dame dizte!
 I was radder of rode þene rose in þe rone,
 My lere as þe lele louched [so lyzte].
 Now am I a graceles gost and grisly I grone;
 Withe Lucyfer in a lake loȝ am I lighte.
 [Thus am I lyke to Lucefere, takis witnes by mee]:
 For al þi fresshe foroure
 Muse one my mirrour,
 For, king and emperour,
 Thus shul ye be.

(*Awntyrs* 157-69)

The rhyming words of the stanza's wheel feature the unusual '-our' ending to rhyme with Gaynour's name, reiterating the *memento mori* message that 'Thus shul [she] be'.

⁶² Turville-Petre, "Summer Sunday", pp. 1-14. For further discussion of the relation of *Three Dead Kings* to the *Awntyrs*, see Ch. 2.1 'Surviving Texts'.

The ghost's suffering body is more of an example to the audience of the poem than to the queen, as the audience is aware of Gaynour's own inevitable future infidelity, the mirroring of mother and daughter is also suggestive that Gaynour inherited this sin from her mother. The ghost's bodily suffering is sexual suffering, an eroticised violence communicated through gruesome moans and shrieks. David Klausner has read the poem against several sermon exempla of the adulterous woman, including that in John Bromeyard's *Summa Predicantium* which moralizes the woman's rotting corpse, identifying the 'toads that torture her lips as "*propter oscula et adulteria colloquia*" [for kisses and adulterous liaisons]', whilst other sermons interpret the toads as the adulterous woman's illegitimate children, as in the Latin *Gesta Romanorum*.⁶³ In the *Awntyrs*, the narrator describes the toads that assail the ghost: 'To telle þe todes þere-one my tonge were fulle tere' (*Awntyrs* 121). The ghost then repeats this line with an important distinction; the ghost does not recognise the toads, symbolic of her adultery: 'Hit were ful tore any tonge my turment to telle' (*Awntyrs* 190). The echo of the earlier statement without explicit reference to the toads expresses a narrative dissociation, suggestive of the ghost's trauma. The pains that she now suffers, she reveals, are a result of '...luf paramour, listes, and delites' (*Awntyrs* 213). The ghost confesses to Gaynour that she did 'brake a solempne a-vowe' (*Awntyrs* 205), returning from the dead to confess this sin and request a trental of masses to ease her torments. The ghost's spoken confession connects the breaking of the vow – which we assume to be the marriage vow – to words that can just as equally mean pleasure, delight and beauty as they do sexual appetite.⁶⁴ Thus, the ghost defines her sins using language that simultaneously references adultery whilst positively talking of pleasure, confessing her sins and yet not explicitly condemning them. This creates a distance between her

⁶³ David N. Klausner, 'Exempla and *The Awntyrs off Arthure*', *Medieval Studies*, 34 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1972), 307-25 (pp. 311-12).

⁶⁴ MED

spoken confession, ambiguous in its moralisation of adultery, and the visual example provided by her body, the typical adulterous woman found in sermon exempla.

The ghost's body, 'Withe þe wilde wormes þat worche...wrake' (216) is suffering and sexless:

Bare was þe body and blake to þe bone,
 Al bi-clagged in clay, vncomly cladde;
 Hit waried, hit wayment as a womane,
 But on hide ne on huwe no heling hit hadde;
 Hit stemered, hit stonayde, hit stode as a stone,
 Hit marred, hit memered, hit mused for madde.

(*Awntyrs* 105-10)

The noise of the ghost is emphasised, and it is this noise which is gendered: 'Hit waried, hit wayment, *as a womane*' (emphasis mine) not the body, which, although 'Naxte, and nedefulle, [and] naked' (*Awntyrs* 185), is described without reference to any womanly features, lacking any reference to breasts, hair, bodily shape or clothes that a reader might expect and that is present in the sermon exempla discussed by Klausner, where the toads or serpents plaguing the corpse are frequently described as hanging from the woman's breasts.⁶⁵ The description alternates between the appearance and movement of the physical body, which is entirely non-gendered, and the noises it makes; its suffering is visibly imagined, but heightened through the aural effect of the alliteration as the tongue trips over the trisyllabic, hyper-alliterated 'memered'. The audience's expected familiarity with the widely disseminated sermon exempla may suggest that the text needs no added moralization, the audience already aware of the implied meaning of the ghost's physical suffering. However, the ambiguity of her speech and the lack of a prescriptive moralized interpretation allows for subversive interpretations, the audience given agency to determine the meaning of the ghost's words separate from the example of her body.

⁶⁵ Klausner, 'Exempla', pp. 310-16.

The ghost's speech then moves to more conventional matters, focusing on the Seven Works of Mercy, key articles of faith and behaviour that were universally taught to the late-medieval laity following their inclusion in the program of instruction set out by Archbishop Pecham of Canterbury at the Lambeth Council of 1281 and re-promulgated as part of Archbishop Thoresby's *Injunctions* issued in York in November 1357.⁶⁶ The Seven Corporeal and Spiritual Works were included in *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, the widely disseminated Northern English translation of Thoresby's *Injunctions* attributed to John Gatrynge, a Benedictine incumbent of St Mary's Abbey, York:

Of whilk the first is to fede tham that er hungry
 That othir, for to gif tham drynk that er thirsty.
 The third, for to clethe tham that er clatheless.
 The ferthe is to herber tham that er houselesse.
 The fifte, for visite tham that ligges in sekenesse.
 The sext, is to help tham that in prison er.
 The sevent, to bery the dede men that has mister.
 Thise er the seuen bodily dedis of merci
 That ilk man augh to do that is mighty.
UNDE VERSUS, vestio, poto, cibo, redimo, tego, colligo, condo.
 Thare er of merci allso seuen gasteli dedis
 That us augh to do to tham that has nede til us:
 Ane is to consaile and wisse tham that er will
 A nothir is to withdrawe tham that will wirk ill.
 The third is to solace tham that er sorowfull.
 The ferthe is to pray for tham that er sinful.
 The fifte is to be *tholemode when men misdos us. *patient
 The sext gladly to forgyf when men has greued us.
 The seuent, when men askes us for to her tham,
 If we can mare than thai for to lere tham.
UNDE VerSUS, Consule, castiga, solare, remitte, fer, ora
 (*Lay Folks' Catechism*, 354-74)⁶⁷

The articles listed in *The Lay Folks' Catechism* are simply written in basic rhyming couplets. The text connects the Works to the penitential, instructing readers that 'God

⁶⁶ Anne Hudson, 'A New Look at the "Lay Folks' Catechism"', *Viator*, 16 (1985), 243-59 (pp. 243-44); Jonathan Hughes, 'Thoresby, John, archbishop of York (d. 1373)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27333>> [accessed 10 September 2018].

⁶⁷ *The Lay Folk's Catechism*, ed. by Thomas Frederick Simmons and Henry Edward Nolloth, *EETS*, orig. ser., 118 (London: 1901). Transcription taken from the York Thoresby register (fols 295-29^v), ll. 354-74. All subsequent references to this version.

sal reherce us opon the dai of dome, | and wit how we haf done tham here in this lyfe' (*Lay Folks' Catechism*, 351-52). This sentiment is likewise spoken by the ghost as she instructs Gaynour to 'Gyf fast of þi goode | To folke þat failene þe fode, | While þou art here' (*Awntyrs*, 232-34), emphasising that Gaynour must carry out these acts whilst she is still living.

The Seven Works of Mercy are embedded into the ghost's speech in the *Awntyrs*. The ghost functions to activate the audience's existing penitential knowledge and provide explicit devotional instruction, taking the form of a catechetical dialogue between Gaynour and her mother. As Ralph Hanna has observed 'the Seven Works occupy a large portion of the ghost's speech explicitly, and when they are not explicit they are at least imagistically relevant.'⁶⁸ In contrast to the elaborate and lengthy description of the ghost and her body, the Works are succinctly presented:

Haue pite one þe poer [while] þou art of powere. (*Awntyrs* 173)
[...]

Waynour y-wys."

"Wysse me", quod Waynour, "some wey if þou wost,
What bedis miȝte me best to þe blisse bringe?"
"Mekenesse and mercy, þes arne þe moost,
[Haue] pite one þe poer, þat pleses heuen king;
Siþene charite is chef, and þene is chaste,
And þene almesse-dede (a)ure al [oper] þing;
Þes arne þe graceful giftes of þe holy goste
Þat enspires iche sprete withe-oute speling.
Of þis spiritual þing spute þou no mare-
[Whills] þou art quene in þi quert
Hold þes wordes in hert:
Þou shal leue but a stert,
Heþene shal þou fare."

(*Awntyrs* 247-60)

In these two stanzas, connected as they are through concatenation, the instructional purpose of the text is most overt. As Gaynour's mother asks her daughter to trust her:

⁶⁸ *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, p. 36.

‘y-wys’, her daughter replies asking to be taught: ““Wysse me””. Thus, the text satisfies the first Work of Spiritual Mercy, as her mother ‘wisse tham that er will’ (*Lay Folks’ Catechism*, 366). The ghost’s response to Gaynour emphasises ‘Meekenesse and mercy’ first above all else. The poet of the *Awntyrs* then connects these two virtues with the Seven Corporeal Works, focusing explicitly on feeding the poor and almsgiving before returning to virtues typically associated with female conduct: charity and chastity. Several of the Corporeal Works of Mercy are embodied in the physical form of Gaynour’s mother; the naked, suffering stranger, a prisoner in purgatory, a sinner who appeared in need of prayers for her soul. In total, the dialogue takes place across seven stanzas, the Seven Works reflected in the structure of the text much in the same way as the Wheel of Fortune is represented in the poem’s *rouncefallis* form, further demonstrating the poet’s skill. Helen Phillips reads the text within a liturgical framework, convincingly interpreting the poem as relating to the twin sacraments of baptism and penance. Phillips states that ‘[t]he ghost’s sermon is not a miscellaneous collection of moral and eschatological teaching; there is a coherent theological scheme behind it’.⁶⁹ The Works of Spiritual Mercy are further implied in the action that takes place during the second half of the poem, principally through Galeron and Gawain’s forgiveness of one another, most explicitly satisfying the sixth Work of Spiritual Mercy; ‘gladly to forgyf when men has greued us’ (*Lay Folks’ Catechism*, 371). This forgiveness, however, occurs only as a result of female action, the women’s pleas for mercy demonstrating that Gaynour has indeed learned from her mother’s instruction.

The Works were ubiquitously recognisable to medieval audiences by the time of the *Awntyrs* composition in the early fifteenth century. As many as fifty parish churches

⁶⁹ Helen Phillips, ‘The Ghost’s Baptism in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*’, *Medium Aevum*, 58.1 (1989), 49-58 (p. 52). It is interesting that when Sir Galeron appears in Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*, it is also related to baptism, referenced as Palomydes’ godfather in ‘Sir Galleron of Galowey’. See *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, pp. 18-19.

featured a wall painting of the Seven Corporeal Works of Mercy, with no standardised schema for representation.⁷⁰ This imagery was also available in stained glass, as in the impressive windows at All Saints Church, North St. in York.⁷¹ The window is contemporary to the composition of the *Awntyrs*, dating from the 1420s and commissioned by the prominent merchant family, the Blackburns of Lancashire, who by the fifteenth century were living and trading in the city of York. Nicholas Blackburn (d. 1432), merchant and mayor of York commissioned both the Corporeal Works of Mercy Window and another window within the church which depicts the family and their favoured saints. This includes an image of St Anne reading to her daughter from a book; the inscription, derived from Psalm 50, reads: ‘D(omin)es salve mea peccatis | aperies et os meum’ (Oh Lord, save me from sins | and open my mouth). This is one of the Seven Penitential Psalms that circulated independently in a paraphrased poetic version during the fifteenth century. One such version survives in London, BL, MS Additional 31042 (the London Thornton manuscript) featuring a very similar metrical verse form to the *Awntyrs* and unique to the Thornton version of the Psalm; written in twelve-line alliterating stanzas rhyming *ababababcdcd*, the eighth and ninth lines linked by iteration.⁷² This text is found circulating with other works which relate to the Seven Works of Mercy, as explored by Annie Sutherland, and are shown to be circulating in booklet form alongside many of the Middle English romances, such as those compiled in the Auchinleck manuscript, CUL, MS Ff.2.38 and the Edinburgh, NLS, MS Advocates 19.3.1.⁷³ The invocation in Psalm 50 to speech, connected as it is to the confession of sin and speaking of prayer, visualised in the window at All Saints in the

⁷⁰ Roger Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 47.

⁷¹ All Saints’ Church, North St. York <<http://allsaints-northstreet.org.uk/stainedglass.html>> [accessed 13 July 2018]. The church also features a visual interpretation of the Middle English text *The Pricke of Conscience*, further demonstrating the literate culture of the local community and the interactions between literary and visual arts.

⁷² Annie Sutherland, *English Psalms in the Middle Ages, 1300-1450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 36-38.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 36-41.

book being read together by mother and daughter, exemplifies the type of wider cultural framework in which the *Awntyrs* existed and is suggestive of the type of cultural work the *Awntyrs* performed for its implied audience.

The poem's actual audiences represented by the surviving manuscript copies were much like the wealthy Blackburn merchants of York who married into prominent northern gentry families. The interaction of literary text, visual art, and spiritual teaching that formed this wider cultural framework is evident therefore not just in the poem, but in the contexts in which the poem is found, such as in the manuscripts compiled by Yorkshire gentleman Robert Thornton.⁷⁴ These cultural works are often associated with the male who commissioned or compiled them, yet their theme and contents have a broader appeal which relates to the whole family. Julia Boffey and Carol Meale have argued that 'the extensive household responsibilities often exercised by women necessitated competence in many areas for which written record or instruction would have been of use'.⁷⁵ This includes the use of service and devotional books, works of religious instruction, practical manuals and 'assorted material for private or social diversion, such as songs or romances and other narratives, might have been communally available.' Though they observe that evidence of women making use of these books is 'often no more than inferential', a close look at many of these manuscripts shows that much of their material recommends itself explicitly to women.⁷⁶ The text *What the Goodwife Taught Her Daughter* features a mother giving instruction to her daughter about the dangers of sexual sin, along with advice on becoming a wife and the performing of one's wifely duties, themes that are likewise represented in the *Awntyrs* through the archetypal characters of the adulterous woman, the intercessory

⁷⁴ For further discussion of this context, see Ch. 4.3 'Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91'.

⁷⁵ Meale and Boffey, 'Gentlewomen's Reading', pp. 535-56.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 536.

queen and maiden-wife. Conduct literature such as *What the Goodwife Taught Her Daughter* were clearly intended for a female audience and was widely circulated, found compiled alongside romance, as in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61, as well as in collections of *pastoralia* intended for an elite urban audience, complied with an early Anglo-Norman prose version of the *Trental of St Gregory* in Cambridge, Emmanuel College, MS 106 (1.4.31), as observed by Felicity Riddy.⁷⁷ Riddy reads the poem as paternalistic teachings ventriloquised through the fictional mother, intended to instruct women in urban contexts, in particular women who had moved away from the familial home. What Riddy astutely observes in her analysis of this text is the different readings that can arise from its different reception contexts, intended perhaps as *pastoralia*, yet becoming popular reading for women of the middling classes instructing servants, and further recognising the texts' potential for resistive reading by the young women it intended to control.

Nevertheless, women had an active interest in controlling women's behaviour, particularly as it pertained to their own family inheritances. The reaction of Margaret Mautby Paston (d. 1482) after having failed to control her daughter Margery's behaviour, provides a powerful example. To her son, John Paston II (d. 1479) Margaret writes: 'As fore your syster I can send 3ow no good tydyngges of her, God make her a good wooman'.⁷⁸ This letter, dated to 1470, highlights Margaret's anger following her daughter's marriage to the family steward Richard Calle. The sorrow felt by Margery upon her marriage to a servant without her family's consent is further expressed in a letter her husband sends to her:

⁷⁷ Felicity Riddy, 'Mother Knows Best: Reading Social Change in a Courtesy Text', *Speculum* 7.1 (1996), 66-86.

⁷⁸ 'Margaret Paston to [John Paston]' (October 28 1470), *Paston Letters*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 5, item 761.

I understende, lady, ye have hadde asmoche sorwe for me as any gentelwoman hath hadde in the worlde, aswolde Godd all that sorwe that ye have hadde had rested upon me, so that ye hadde be discharged of it, for I wis, lady, it is to me a deethe to her that ye be entreted other wise thene ye ought to be.⁷⁹

The rhetoric of sorrow that Richard Calle employs in this letter speaks to the sorrow the ghost likewise expresses in the *Awntyrs*, her speech talking of love and pleasure, which brought her only grief and pain, recognising the co-existence of a woman's multiple, complex emotions and experiences. In his letter, Richard Calle writes of her family who attempt to keep them apart. Though Margery marries without her family's consent, demonstrating an agency to act independently from her mother's control, this is not without severe consequences, punished by her family for not doing her duty of marrying ambitiously. These themes are likewise represented in the *Awntyrs*, the three generations of women functioning as examples of a woman's continued need to be "good" for the benefit of herself, her family and wider society. The ghost is the example to learn from, having failed to be a good wife, Gaynour must behave as a good wife to King Arthur, something she enacts in the second half of the poem through the role of intercessory queen, and Galeron's lover succeeds in marrying well, ensuring her lover first reclaims and extends his lands and titles whilst also ensuring his life, achieving for herself a good marriage and an impressive inheritance for any future heirs.

Catherine Sanok in *Her Life Historical: Exemplarity and Female Saints' Lives in Late Medieval England* (2007) explores the function of saints' lives as exemplary texts for an imagined female audience. She argues that:

Medieval women were surely too diverse in their personal experience and their social identities to form a single, coherent interpretive community. But saint's lives, although they sometimes acknowledge differences based on age, sexual status, and class affiliation, generally imagine a collective feminine response.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ 'Richard Calle to Margery Paston' (1469), *Paston Letters*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 5, item 713.

⁸⁰ Sanok, *Her Life Historical*, p. xii.

The *Awntyrs* similarly imagines a collective feminine response. The function of Gaynour's mother as an exemplum further connects it to the genre Sanok discusses and thus to its audiences. The central function of the *Awntyrs* is to instruct and control women, the text's "ideal" reader/listener an obedient, pious woman. This does not exclude diverse interpretations of the poem, but rather encourages them through its conventional rehearsing of the Seven Works of Mercy. As Sanok observes: 'the imperative to imitate or perform a scripted ethical paradigm always produces difference'.⁸¹ This is nowhere more evident than in the differences which can be observed in the speech of the narrator, the ghost, and Gaynour, who all engage in an act of retelling the same story, one that is altered in each retelling, with multiple fictional female responses recognised in the poem. The text writes within itself different audience responses to the marvel being witnessed, further encouraging multiple responses to the poem's central, scripted ethical paradigm that women should be meek, merciful and chaste, without directly challenging this paradigm. The contexts for the implied audience reception of the *Awntyrs* are as heterogenous as the women it collectively imagines, able to appeal to audiences of urban elite, such as those represented in the window at All Saints in York, a similar audience to the conduct literature Riddy argues for *What the Goodwife Taught Her Daughter*, with the concerns of controlling female behaviour similarly of interest to women of gentry families, as the Pastons of Norfolk. Both the Seven Works of Mercy and sermon exempla like the adulterous woman were so ubiquitous in fifteenth-century England that the *Awntyrs*, engaging in the same work as these texts, can be expected to have also appealed to a more popular audience. One of the ways this audience could have accessed the text is by being among the households of families where the poem was likely being performed. An aural reception is represented within the poem as Gaynour recounts her experience

⁸¹ Ibid., p. xiv.

to a mixed audience that includes the servants of her royal household. Thus, this fictional audience shows how the poem's central spiritual instruction could have been communicated to a broader collection of people.

No manuscript evidence of the *Awntyrs* survives to directly connect it to a female religious community, yet its construction of an imagined literary community of pious women is suggestive of its potential reception amongst this audience. Only sixty-eight books have survived from Syon Abbey, accounting for a third of all books which can be connected to female religious communities.⁸² Scholars such as David N. Bell, Paul Lee and Mary Erler, who have worked extensively on reconstructing the lost libraries of English convents, have all stressed the lack of evidence as well as the extensive losses, with no extant library catalogues and very few inventories from female religious institutions having survived.⁸³ Nevertheless, scholars have argued that nuns would have had access to a vibrant literary culture, especially those situated in the environs of London. Such proximity, Boffey states, 'was hugely significant in the transmission of non-metropolitan religious works to the London area, since both places were well-stocked with books and had close links to London citizens and book-producers'.⁸⁴ Ryan Perry has also argued for the transmission of devotional texts to religious communities through high-status networks.⁸⁵ Close attention to the manuscripts and texts associated with these communities of women has revealed the intricacies of their reading habits. Although communities like Syon were encouraged to engage in textual practices – a rule of Syon abbey stipulating that 'an unlimited supply

⁸² Erler, *Women, Reading, and Piety*, p. 36.

⁸³ See: Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners'; Lee, *Nunneries*; and Erler, *Women, Reading, and Piety*.

⁸⁴ Julia Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London c. 1475-1530* (London: The British Library, 2012), p. 8, p. 32.

⁸⁵ Ryan Perry, "'some sprytuall matter of gostly edyfycacion": Readers and Readings of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*', *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ: Exploring the Middle English Tradition*, ed. by Ian Johnson and Allan F. Westphall (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 79-126 (p. 121).

of books' should be made available to the sisters to read as part of their devotions – this was not without some restriction on how they consumed these texts. Perry's analysis of the Warminster, Longleat House, MS 14 copy of *The Myroure of Oure Lady*, a manuscript procured c. 1425-50 for the sisters of Syon Abbey, argues that the layout of the text implied that it was accessed communally, selections of the text devised to be read by a *lector* in relation to days of the liturgical calendar. Perry argues that the author shows a concern that the work not be misunderstood by the sisters, thus having selections of the text read within a strict liturgical framework ensured that Love's text was excerpted appropriately to the benefit of the community's devotional education.⁸⁶ Syon Abbey can be further connected to the poem *Disce Mori*, a mid-fifteenth-century text written for 'my best beloved Suster dame Alice | Whiche that for Jesus' love have hool forsake | The world, the flesh, and the fende's malice'; this poetic inscription has been interpreted to identify Alice as a nun, having forsaken the world, the flesh and the devil. It survives in two manuscripts, one of which is linked to Syon Abbey through the signature of Dorothy Slyght, recorded as a sister at the time of the Abbey's Dissolution in 1539.⁸⁷ The poem, composed in the mid-fifteenth century, focuses on dying well, yet is a mixture of prayers, dialogues and instructions relating to basic tenements of the faith, clearly intended for a female reader. Furrow observes that the poem expected its reader to be familiar with romance, as it quotes from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.⁸⁸ Whereas Syon Abbey's copy of Love's *Mirror* demonstrates the desire to control women's interpretation of texts, the *Disce Mori* demonstrates the complex nexus of cultural and specifically textual associations with which audiences were supposed to meaningfully engage, both examples acknowledging women's active participation in critical literary interpretation and textual culture.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 114-21.

⁸⁷ Furrow, *Expectations of Romance*, p. 224.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 225.

A. I. Doyle's study of two manuscripts details the complex transmission of texts between two religious houses, Barking Abbey and Dartford Priory, connected through the personal relationships of Elizabeth de Vere, countess of Oxford (d. 1537).⁸⁹ Elizabeth de Vere's aunt Joan was prioress of Dartford from c. 1471-72 and her sister Ann a nun at Barking Abbey by c. 1485 and cellaress of the same in 1527, whilst Elizabeth's cousin, Margaret Scrope, was the Abbey's chantress, Margaret's own interest in vernacular literature is evident from her ownership of *The Mirror of the Life of Christ*.⁹⁰ This example illustrates an active engagement in literary culture by communities of women in the fifteenth century, texts being transmitted from male members of the urban gentry to nuns, circulating within multiple female religious institutions, before being owned and associated with a woman of high, secular status. Doyle identifies the first half of London, BL, MS Harley 1706 as a direct copy of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 322, the latter containing an inscription stating its use for Petronilla Wrattisley, nun of Dartford Priory and niece of the manuscript's donor, William Baron, an officer of the Royal Exchequer, involved in city affairs.⁹¹ These manuscripts contain a diverse collection of items, several of which share the same penitential themes and moralised chivalric concerns as the *Awntyrs*: the lyric poem *The Bird with Four Feathers*, otherwise known as 'a trefyde of Parce Michi Domine', is an emotionally affective text. The poet, whilst walking in the forest, overhears a bird praying to God for mercy having lost its four principal feathers: youth, beauty, strength and wealth. The feathers are moralised as the bird laments its sins and the poet learns from the bird's example to pray to God for mercy, introspective as the Latin refrain

⁸⁹ A. I. Doyle, 'Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, ESAH new. ser. 25 (Colchester: Society at the Museum in the Castle, 1958), part 2, pp. 222-43.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 224; TNA PROB 11/27/144; Riddy, "'Women talking about the things of God'", p. 108.

⁹¹ Doyle, 'Books Connected with the Vere Family', pp. 222-28.

becomes part of their own meditative vocabulary.⁹² The manuscripts further contain: 'Death's Warning to the World', eight stanzas partly excerpted from Lydgate's *The Fall of Princes*, prefaced in both manuscripts by an image of death as a skeleton; an English version of the *Scala Claustralium* by Guigo II, a moralisation of the equipment of a knight; and more basic religious teachings in the vernacular, including couplet versions of both the Seven Works of Bodily and Seven Works of Spiritual Mercy.⁹³

The contents of these two books thus perform similar cultural work for their audiences as the *Awntyrs*. Moreover, the nuns of Dartford Priory owned Arthurian material, a copy of the Middle English prose *Brut* is extant in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 490 (E.2.15), a manuscript explicitly copied for the use of the religious household: '*Iste Liber constat Religiosis sororibus de Dertford*'.⁹⁴ The circulation of the *Awntyrs* in this context must therefore be considered. The poem's earliest surviving copy is extant in Lambeth 491a, a manuscript of the same Essex dialect as Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 322, the Dartford Priory manuscript which served as a copy for BL Harley 1706 owned by Barking Abbey and Elizabeth de Vere, discussed above.⁹⁵ Lambeth 491a, as I will argue in the following chapter, was a manuscript produced in London for the scribe's own use as an exemplar, which then came to be connected to a gentry family living in Barking by the early-sixteenth century.⁹⁶ Barking Abbey is documented as having an extensive library, with several records indicating the vibrant textual culture surrounding the community.⁹⁷ Sibilla de Felton, abbess from 1393-1419 is recorded as having owned several texts and as having the Barking Ordinal recopied in

⁹² *The Bird with Four Feathers, Moral Love Songs and Laments*, ed. by Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998).

⁹³ DIMEV 4905: London, BL, MS Harley 1706; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 322 (SC 21896).

⁹⁴ Lee, *Nunneries*, p. 168, p. 211.

⁹⁵ 'LP 6240; Grid 545 210 (Essex)', *LALME*.

⁹⁶ See Chapter 4.1 'London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a'.

⁹⁷ Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners', pp. 41-42, p. 69. For a list of books connected to Barking Abbey, see also pp. 107-17.

c. 1404.⁹⁸ The ordinal contains detailed instructions for the yearly return and redistribution of books to each nun, referring to both a book cupboard (*armarium*) and a female librarian. The ordinal further contains warnings in Latin and French against the mistreatment of books: users were not to deface or cut the books, nor leave them in cloister or choir, nor lend books belonging to the abbey to people outside of the convent. The need for such warnings is evidence enough to indicate that such practices were common.⁹⁹ Jennifer N. Brown and Donna Alfano Bussell's edited collection *Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture, Authorship and Authority in a Female Community* (2012) offers an in-depth assessment of Barking as a 'literary territory', looking at the influence the religious community had on wider literary and textual cultures, as well as the textual practices the nuns participated in within the convent, focusing on vernacular text, liturgical knowledge, multilingualism and performance.¹⁰⁰

It is important to consider the role women may have played in the circulation of the *Awntyrs*, especially given the fictional transmission of texts presented within the poem. The *Awntyrs* constructs an imagined female literary community, implying through its complex characterisation of women and identification of their sex with speech an implied "ideal" female reader concerned with her devotional practice. The

⁹⁸ Cavanaugh, 'Books Privately Owned', pp. 337-38.

⁹⁹ Josephine Koster Tarvers, "'Thys ys my mystry's boke': English Women as Readers and Writers in Late Medieval England", *The Uses of Manuscripts in Literary Studies: Essays in Memory of Judson Boyce Allen*, ed. by Charlotte Cook Morse, Penelope Reed Doob and Marjorie Curry Woods (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), pp. 305-28 (p. 309). According to Tarvers, Latin liturgical performances were also written at Barking by a previous abbess, Katherine of Sutton. Other instances of female authorship at Barking Abbey date back to the twelfth century, including Saints' lives of Katherine and Edward the Confessor composed in Anglo-Norman by Clemence of Barking. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne argues that these texts are the only versions to contain the perspective of Edward's queen, Edith, and have much in common with twelfth-century romance. See: "'Clerc u lai, muine u dame": Women and Anglo-Norman Hagiography in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 61-85 (pp. 67-70).

¹⁰⁰ Jennifer N. Brown and Donna Alfano Bussell, 'Introduction: Barking's Lives, the Abbey and its Abbesess', *Barking Abbey*, eds Brown and Bussell, pp. 1-30 (p. 17).

ghost embodies the texts of the Seven Works of Mercy, becoming text through her oral teaching of important articles of faith, transmitting this knowledge to her daughter. Crucially, the poem concludes with Gaynour purchasing prayers for her mother: the queen writes ‘To al þe religious to rede and to singe | Prestes with processione to pray were prest | With a mylione of masses to make þe mynnynge’ (*Awntyrs* 704-06), thereby satisfying the fourth work of Spiritual Mercy ‘to pray for tham that er sinful’ (*Lay Folks’ Catechism* 369), whilst also returning to the act of writing text. The *Awntyrs* ends, as it began, with an emphasis on the written text as Gaynour ‘gared wisely write in-[to] þe west’ (*Awntyrs* 703). Gaynour’s actions exemplify how she has gained knowledge through oral catechetical teaching, writing ‘wisely’, that is with spiritual insight, moving beyond her earlier speech to the more intellectual form of the written word. Haught reads this as a continued demonstration of Gaynour’s desire to learn, recognising the significance that both the subject and object of this important knowledge are female.¹⁰¹ However, the actions of Gaynour also provide us with another model for the imagined transmission of text, one that conceives of Gaynour as the origin of the written tale, her letter being circulated to ‘Boke-lered mene, bisshops þe best, | Þorghe al Bretayne...’ (*Awntyrs* 707-08). It is significant that in the two versions of this poem that are compiled in gentry household manuscripts, this line is emended to also include the text’s circulation to secular learned men: ‘Dukes Erles Baronns and bechoppes of the beste’ (*Awntyrs*, Lincoln 91, 583) and ‘boke lornut byruns and bischeppus of þe beste’ (*Awntyrs*, Princeton Taylor 9, 682). These versions, copied for the use of a gentry family, demonstrate a desire of the owners to write their own means of receiving the text into the origin-tale, collapsing the distinction between fictional and actual audience to more directly connect themselves with the poem.

¹⁰¹ Haught, ‘Ghostly Mothers’, p. 7.

3.3 Might and Mercy

For all its devotional elements, the poem's use of the marvellous in its catechetical teaching aligns it more with romance, owing especially to the poet's appropriation of the Arthurian tradition. The catechesis is framed within conventional scenes of hunting, feasting and fighting. It is an analysis of the tournament scene to which I will now turn. The second half of the poem has traditionally been read as more explicitly chivalric, taking the form of a battle between two knights over a territorial dispute. Haught has argued that the second episode of the poem marks a 'shift from the female-centred discourse of the previous adventure to the male-centred concerns of this one'. I would like to offer an alternative reading, one that acknowledges that, although the episode, as Haught states, 'reasserts the primacy of ritualized violence as the premier form of masculine discourse', it does so through a narrative perspective that is equally sympathetic to the concerns of women, one which reasserts meekness and mercy as the premier form of feminine discourse, performed through the overt display of emotions by both Galeron's lover and Queen Gaynour and expressed through the speech-acts of these female characters.¹⁰² Furthermore, the episode is not without an otherworldly interruption, as Haught argues, but rather the dramatic screeches of Gaynour's lover at the height of the violent action recalls the 'grime bere' (*Awntyrs* 125) of the ghost, bringing the otherworldly into the Arthurian court, disrupting the chivalric ritual to reiterate the importance of the Seven Works of Mercy. The women of the episode, though subdued to the role of intercessors, nevertheless function to determine the action of the poem, working to counteract the masculine acts of violence, ultimately using their power to bring about the romance's happy ending and maintain the chivalric ideal. Lastly, the chivalric setting of the poem does not preclude its

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 1

function as a devotionally educative text, but rather enhances the effectiveness of the exemplarity of Queen Gaynour, its central character.

Once the ghost departs from the scene, the narrator returns to the text and the poem's second episode commences. The events that occur are now entirely public, with the action of the poem taking place before the assembled court of King Arthur. The challenge by Sir Galeron is presented to the court by his anonymous lover:

“Mone makeles of mighte,
Here commes ane errant kniȝte,
Do him resone and riȝte
For þi manhede”

(*Awntyrs* 348-51)

The lady appeals to the king on gendered terms, asking that he be fair and just, connecting these virtues to his ‘manhede’. As in the first episode, it is a woman who is first to speak and who thus determines the narrative action which follows. The lady's presentation of the knight is highly conventional, but it is in such convention, as Vines' argues, that female characters can act as negotiators of chivalric ideals, and indeed are able to exert significant acts of social and cultural influence.¹⁰³ The king responds with speech that mirrors the lady's, using the same rhyme-words and likewise appearing in the wheel of the stanza:

"Welcome, worpely wight,
He shal haue resone and righte;
Whe(p)ene is þe comli kniȝte,
If hit be þi wille?"

(*Awntyrs* 361-64)

The king's dialogue follows the same construction as the maiden's, first recognising her gender as a ‘worpely wight’, her womanhood associated with her beauty, nobility and her will, in an equal and balanced exchange. The flattering description of her superior

¹⁰³ Amy N. Vines, *Women's Power in Late Medieval Romance* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), p. 2.

beauty then ensues, followed by an equally flattering description of the ‘errant knight’ in all his shining armour. The king, left unanswered, then speaks again:

Arthur asked one hízte, [one] herand hem alle,
 "What woldes þou, wee, if hit be thi wille?
 Tel me what þou seches and wheþer þou
 shalle,
 And whi þou, sturne one þi stede, stondes so
 stille."

Awntyrs, ed. Gates, 404-07

Arthour askyd in hight heryng hem alle
 What woldist þu wight if it be þi wille
 Tel me what þow says & whidir þu shall
 & whi þu studiast in þis stede & stondist still

Awntyrs, London, Lambeth Palace Library,
 MS 491a, fol. 281v, 398-401

The editors of the poem have all assumed the king directs his speech at this point to the knight, line 405 interpreted to be a command “‘What woldes þou, *wee*, if hit be thi wille?’” (*Awntyrs* 405, emphasis mine). A variant reading, however, is provided by Lambeth 491a, written in this manuscript as ‘wight’. This seems to repeat the king’s previous question in lines 361-64, directed to the lady, who is referred to throughout the poem as ‘wight’. This reading adds sophistication to the king’s speech, incorporating an internal rhyme at the cesura of the first two long-lines in ‘hight’ and ‘wight’, utilising the same rhyme-words from the previous exchange of dialogue between lady and king. The king then asks of the lady: ‘Tel me what þow says & whidir þu shall’ (*Awntyrs*, Lambeth 491a, 400), repeating the same question Gawain asks of the ghost earlier in the text: ‘That þou sei me þe sothe wheþer þou shalle’ (*Awntyrs* 135). Through her disruption of courtly activities, the anonymous lady parallels the ghost. I would argue that the king only then directs his speech to the knight in the stanza’s fourth line; the increased alliteration modulating the rhythm and tone of his speech, he asks the knight why he ‘stondist still’, which can be defined as both a lack of movement and as silence. This is significant as the anonymous woman’s ‘wille’ is repeatedly referred to, her speech determining the action, whereas the knight stands dumb – much like Gawain in the first scene of the text – firmly identifying speech as a womanly act in the poem in contrast to violence, which is presented as the act of men. Indeed, in the earlier episode

Gawain promises the queen that he will ‘speke withe þe sprete’ (*Awntyrs* 101) but instead takes violent action towards the ghost; ‘He rayked [to it one] a res’ (*Awntyrs* 112).

Gaynour functions as the hyper-feminine prototype through her performance of the intercessory queen. This action, however, only occurs as a direct result of Galeron’s lover, who encourages the queen to enact her role. The maiden shrieks at two key points in the text: ‘Þene his lemmane on lowde sk[ri]lles and sk[ri]kes’ (*Awntyrs* 536) and ‘Þene his lemmane one loft skrilles and skrikes’ (*Awntyrs* 619). Her screeches echo the shrieks of the birds who flee from the forest, frightened by the sight of the ghost: ‘Þe birdes in þe bowes | ...Þei skryke in þe skowes’ (*Awntyrs* 127-29). This shriek acts then as an aural remembrance, the ghost and the death she represents brought into the action of the battle at the moments when the knights’ lives are most in danger. The noise, coming from the young, beautiful maiden, succeeds in vocalising an eroticised violence, the object of which is now the young knights who tear into one another’s flesh. Directly following the lover’s shriek, Sir Galeron beheads Gawain’s horse, the epitomic symbol of his knighthood. This effectively emasculates Gawain: ‘Thus wepus for wo Wowayn þe wight’ (*Awntyrs* 560). Gawain displays emotions which are associated with the female sex, as he ‘wepus for wo’, referred to as ‘wight’, a word otherwise used exclusively to describe the female characters of the poem. This moment of grief is followed by a response of extreme violence, a hypermasculine retaliation in which the combat moves from being merely ritualistic to destructive.

The distress of those watching the scene is intensified as the violence escalates, and after several blows, the knights fight in hand-to-hand combat:

Hardely þene þes hapelese one helmes þey hewe,
 Þei betene downe beriles and bourdures [so] bright;
 Shildes one shildres, þat shene were to shewe,
 Fretted were in fyne golde - þei failene in fighte;

Stones of iral þey strenkel and strewe,
 Stiþe stapeles of stele þey strike done st(r)izte;
 Burnes bannene þe tyme þe bargane was brewe,
 The dougheti withe dyntes so delfully were dight.

(*Awntyrs* 586-93)

The action in this scene is heightened by its alliterative excess, all lines featuring at least four alliterated stresses. This excess is significant, as the narrator describes the decorative, expensive clothing, the precious gems, fine gold and rich stones falling away as the knights strike, the ritualized battle becoming destructive, wounding their bodies whilst working to destroy the chivalric, masculine ideal symbolised in their armour. The poet thus presents the masculine action as self-destructive, returning to the poem's central theme of mutability. The manuscript versions then all significantly disagree in the wheel of this stanza:

<p>[Þe dyntis of þo doghty were doutous by-dene; Bothe Sir L(o)te and Sir Lake Miche morn yng þei make; Gaynor gret for her sake Wiþ her grey eyen].</p> <p>Thus gretis Gaynour withe boþe here gray yene, For gref of Sir Gawayne, grisly was wound</p> <p>Gates ed. (1969), 594-600</p>	<p>Þe dyntis of þo doghty were doutons by dene Bothe Sir lete and S[ir] lake Miche morn yng þei make Gaynor gret for her sake Wiþ her grey eyen</p> <p>Thus grette dame Gaynor þt grete grefe was to sene For greef of S[ir] Gawayn þat was grisly wounded</p> <p>London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a, fols 284v-85r, 588-94</p>
<p>Hit hirte king arther in herte and mengit his mode Bothe sir lote and sir lake Mecull menyng con make Þenne dame gaynor grette for his sake For gawan þe gode</p> <p>Þenne grette dame gaynor wt hur gray een For grefe of sir gauan graulich wounndes</p> <p>Princeton University Library, MS Taylor 9, fol. 13v, 572-78.</p>	<p>Thene gretes Gayno[ur] wt bothe her gray ene For þo douzhti þat fight Were manly mached of might With oute resone or right As al mene sene</p> <p>Thus gretis Gayno[ur] with boþe her gray yene For gref of S[ir] Gawayne grisly was wounded</p> <p>Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324 fol. 10r, 593-99</p>

The text transmitted in Lambeth 491a is the reading followed by Gates in his edition of the poem, though he amends the first long-line of the following stanza here to follow Oxford Douce 324, adding concatenation to the line where it is absent from the other

three versions of the text, the version transmitted in Lincoln 91 lacking at this point due to the manuscript having lost half a folio.¹⁰⁴ The editors of the *Awntyrs* all use this lack of concatenation as evidence for the poem's corruption. Yet, the amended ninth line of the stanza reveals intentional alterations the poem, with significant consequence to the meaning communicated. Phillips has convincingly argued that the poet modulates his style at certain key points in the *Awntyrs*, the lack of iteration not to be read simply as a lack of skill, but as a representation of a shift in tone: in moments of heightened drama the iteration is prominent, in contrast to a noticeable 'shift down to iterationless stanzas' for the more melancholy scenes, such as the death of Gawain's horse, Grissell.¹⁰⁵ The above stanza is likewise concerned with melancholy, the characters outwardly grieving for the wounds sustained by the knights. In both Lambeth 491a and Princeton Taylor 9, the knights Sir Lote and Sir Lake are shown to be moaning, making noises typical of the female sex, suggesting that the violence has exceeded normal expectations of male action, thereby disrupting the established gender paradigm. This technique is used elsewhere in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, where Arthur's weeping and wringing of his hands is explicitly associated with the emotional response of a woman: 'It is no worship, iwis, to wring thine handes; | To weep als a woman it is no wit holden! | Be knightly of countenance, als a king sholde.' (AMA 3977-79). Anne Clarke Bartlett argues that these lines demonstrate the complete emasculation of King Arthur.¹⁰⁶ In the *Awntyrs*, the weeping of the knights similarly follows the emasculation of Gawain. In both, weeping is then explicitly defined and expressed as a feminine, gendered behaviour.

¹⁰⁴ Folio 159 of Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91 is lacking its lower half. See Ch. 4.3 'Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91' for further discussion.

¹⁰⁵ Phillips, 'Structure and Meaning', p. 66.

¹⁰⁶ Anne Clark Bartlett, 'Cracking the Penile Code: Reading Gender and Conquest in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*', *Arthuriana* 8.2 (1998), 56-76 (p. 73).

Each version of the poem amends the prominent ninth line of this stanza, constructing a different reading for its audience. The ninth line offers the best opportunity for emendation, not having to follow the rhyme of the stanza's previous eight lines, only having to rhyme with the final thirteenth line. In Lambeth 491a, the ninth line refers to the dreadful blows the knights exchange, concluding the stanza with Gaynour's weeping, grey eyes, the first line of the following stanza emphasising the public nature of her displayed grief in keeping with the model of gendered behaviour established earlier in the poem; 'grete grefe was to sene | For greffee of S[ir] Gawayn' (*Awntyrs*, Lambeth 491a, 593-94). In Princeton Taylor 9, however, the reader is provided with the only insight into King Arthur's internal emotional state; 'hit hurte king arther in herte and mengit his mode' (*Awntyrs*, Princeton Taylor 9, 572). The text describes the king's pain as he witnesses the scene, suggesting the violence troubles his heart. It is linked directly through rhyme to the stanza's thirteenth line, emphasising that Arthur suffers specifically for Gawain. This shift in focus from Gaynour to Gawain at the end of the stanza, necessitated by the change in the rhyme-word of the ninth line, constructs a specifically homosocial bond within the text, between knight and king. The ninth line however, falters in its alliterative structure, perhaps suggesting that whomever altered the line was less able to construct the typical *aa/ax* alliterative pattern of the poem, or rather, perhaps it functions to further illustrate the severity of the king's emotions, his disturbed state reflected in the line's disturbed alliteration.

Oxford Douce 324 represents a potentially corrupted text. This is indicated by the ninth line, which matches the first line of the following stanza: 'Thus gretis Gayno[ur] with boþe her gray yene' (*Awntyrs*, Oxford Douce 324, 598). This suggests that the wheel of the stanza was lacking in the Douce scribe's copy-text. The scribe likely copied the first line of the following stanza as the ninth line before recognising the missing wheel, using stock rhymes: 'fíght|míght|ríght' (a continuation of the rhymes

in the stanza's preceding long-lines) to construct the wheel and make up for the poem's missing text. Whatever the reason for their emendation, these lines construct an alternative reading for their audience. As argued earlier, weeping in the *Awntyrs*, as in the alliterative *Morte*, is defined as an explicitly female emotional response. Thus, the hyper-masculine violence of the men in this stanza is framed within the hyper-feminine display of weeping. Though the rhyme may appear simpler, a use of basic stock-rhyme of the kind associated with action, it in fact presents Gaynour's emotions as operating within a complex construct of gender:

Thene gretes Gayno[ur] wt bothe her gray ene
 For þo douȝhti þat fiȝht
 Were manly mached of might
 With oute resone or right
 As al mene sene

Thus gretis Gayno[ur] with boþe her gray yene

(*Awntyrs*, Oxford Douce 324, fol. 10r, 593-98)

The masculine violence is represented through active verbs as the lines reveal Gaynour as weeping for the honourable that fight, the equally-matched masculine prototypes that engage in senseless violence 'with oute reasons or right' within the public sphere 'as al mene sene', contrasting the public performance of the ritualized violence to the public performance of Gaynour's sorrow, her weeping also for all men to 'sene', rhyming with the line that invokes her sight 'yene'. The emotions of Gaynour here are both public and introspective as she appears to weep for the senseless nature of the violence, the insight gained from her mother communicated in the repetition of the line 'with oute resone or right' earlier spoken by Gawain as he asks of the ghost:

"How shal we fare," quod þe freke, "þat fondene to fighte
 And þus defoulene þe folke one fele kinges londes;
 And riches ouer reymes with-outene eny righte-
 Wynnene worshippe in werre þorghe wightnesse of hondes?"

(*Awntyrs* 261-64)

The fight scene of Gawain and Galeron functions as an example to the queen. She is witness to the violent ends the ghost prophesied as they are acted out in front of her, the deathly warning of the ghost no longer confined to the limens of the forest. Though the changes to this line may be the result of a corruption in the poem's transmission, it provides a moment of creativity which distinctly shows the medieval reader's interpretation the text. Whereas Princeton Taylor 9 shows the reader's favour for Gawain and desire to know the king's internal emotional response to the violence, Oxford Douce 324 is more sympathetic to the female perspective, focusing on the queen's developing introspection.

As both knights are nearly killed, Sir Galeron's lover shrieks for the second time, before uttering the remaining four-lines of speech given to her:

Ho gretes one Gaynour with gronyng grylle:
 "Lady makeles of mighte,
 Haf mercy one yondre knizte,
 That is so delfulle dizte,
 If hit be thi wille."

(*Awntyrs* 620-24)

Her first shriek fails to effectively end the violence as Gaynour fails to intercede. However, at the second shriek, Galeron's lover begs the queen for mercy, her 'gronyng grylle' reminiscent of the womanly wailing of the grisly ghost and a display of her own female suffering. The syntax directly follows that of her address to King Arthur at the beginning of the episode; she appeals to the queen on the same terms, appealing to her power; 'mighte', as well as to the feminine qualities she possesses; her 'mercy' and 'wille'. The final line of her speech 'If hit be thi wille' (*Awntyrs* 620) is a repetition of the line spoken to the maiden by the king at lines 364 and 405, discussed above. This repetition functions to connect Gaynour and the maiden as direct parallels. The speech-acts of the maiden therefore serve as a narrative frame for the masculine violence – she commences the action through her petition to the king, her shrieks punctuating at the

moments when each knight's life is most in danger, first Gawain's and then Sir Galeron's, before ending the action through her spoken plea to the queen.

The poet reiterates the association of women with 'wille' through the queen's action, as she goes to the king in supplication:

[Than wilfully] Dame Waynour to þe king wente,
 Ho cauȝte of her coronalle and kneled him tille:
 "As þou art (r)oy roial, richest of rente,
 And I þi wife, wedded at þi owne wille,
 [..]
 The grones of Sir Gawayne greuene me sare;
 Woldest þou, leve lorde,
 Make þes knightes accorde,
 Hit were a grete conforde
 For alle þat [here] ware."

(*Awntyrs* 625-37)

The queen 'wilfully' petitions the king, the iteration functioning here to mirror the words of the anonymous maiden, connecting the ghost, Gaynour, and maiden once more, whilst also asserting the queen's own agency as intercessor. The queen beseeches the king not as a royal, but as his humble wife, removing her symbol of power – her crown – pleading with him because of her own emotional turmoil over Gawain's wounds. She pleads not just for herself, but for the sake of all. Paul Strohm has stated that the intercessory queen 'invited women to correct male judgement, so long as that judgment was modified or supplemented rather than overturned'.¹⁰⁷ The queen's act of mercy accomplishes this, returning the court to peace and upholding the chivalric ideal. Gaynour satisfies the typical behaviors of an intercessory queen, which according to Strohm: 'emphasize a range of virtues regarded as "feminine" in their emphasis on queenly access to mercy or compassion, personal experience of abjection or sorrow, and

¹⁰⁷ Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, p. 96.

deference to established authority.’¹⁰⁸ Significantly, the king does not reply, nor is he given a chance to respond:

Thene spak Sir Galerone to Gawayne þe good:
 "I wende neuer wee in þis world had bene half so wiȝte;
 Here I make þe releyse, renke, by þe rode,
 [And by-fore thiese ryalles resynge] þe my righte;
 And siþene make the monradene with a mylde mode,
 As mane of medlert makeles of mighte.”

(*Awntyrs* 638-43)

The speech and gestures of Sir Galeron effectively silence the king. He speaks to his opponent and equal, Gawain, but the praise offered in his speech, I argue, is directed at Queen Gaynour, not at Sir Gawain as Thomas Hahn interprets in his edition: ‘I never imagined [there was a] knight in the world [who] was half so powerful [as you are]’.¹⁰⁹ This interpretation is dependent on ‘wight’ being defined as male, but as previously established, this is consistently used to describe Galeron’s lover, the exemplary woman, and otherwise employed to emasculate Gawain at the moment he weeps for his dead horse, the symbol of his masculinity. The assumption that power in this poem is male perhaps leads to this conclusion, but the re-gendering of the poems’ source texts and its related textual traditions constitutes a re-gendering of power. The word ‘wight’ is decidedly feminine within this text, and it is entirely plausible that Galeron is talking of Queen Gaynour and her power, as a Lady ‘makeles of mighte’ (*Awntyrs* 621) who intervened with mercy to save his life. This interpretation seems more in keeping with the overall moral of the poem and more befitting to the implied audience of female reader/listeners.

The land dispute in the second half of the *Awntyrs* has been interpreted as a specifically male concern, resolved through male violence, a critical perspective

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, pp. 96-97.

¹⁰⁹ *The Awntyrs off Arthure, Sir Gawain Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. Hahn (Kalamazoo, MI: 1995), pp. 169-227, l. 639, fn. 57.

informed by the predominantly male documentary culture of late-medieval Britain. An overemphasis on documentary culture in interpreting the medieval past excludes women from historical narratives, who appear only infrequently in records.¹¹⁰ However, just because women are not as visible in documentary evidence does not mean they did not participate in this sphere; as the Paston letters demonstrate, gentry women were active in the defence of the family estates. In a dispute over lands in Norfolk, Margery Paston even jokes that ‘one word of a woman should do more than the wordes of xx. men’ to bring about a resolution.¹¹¹ Margery’s joke reinforces the idea that women’s speech had the power to restore harmony, as exemplified in the *Awntyrs*. The territorial dispute in the *Awntyrs* is brought before the court by a woman; the resolution is brought about by the collective action of women who are rewarded for their efforts. Whereas Gaynour has received spiritual insight, Galeron’s lover has ensured her betrothed has claimed back his rightful lands and even extended them, making him an even better match for her and her future heirs. Judging from the ghost’s earlier prophecy that ‘al þe rial rowte of þe rounde table, | Þei shullene dye one a day’ (*Awntyrs* 304-05), this will one day make her a widow of significant wealth. Marriage was one of the few ways women could increase their status, a good marriage giving women greater access to privilege, and thus more agency. The message of mercy communicated in the poem may have been of even more importance to an audience who did in fact wield a lot of power and influence. The poem reinforces a gender system where women are merciful and men mighty. If women were

¹¹⁰ One example is Michael Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry* (2014). Johnston reinterprets several of the manuscripts that relate to this study, focusing on the formation of a gentry imaginary centred on the expression of socio-economic identity in romance texts. His study relies heavily on documentary culture and manuscript evidence, and although it provides insight into the role socio-economic status may have had on the audiences of the romances he discusses, the imagined audience Johnston communicates is a male one, as he discusses how knights, gentlemen and noblemen responded to text, with little consideration of the use and reception of these texts by female readers, despite them also being part of the newly formulated middle classes.

¹¹¹ ‘Margery Paston to John Paston’ (November 1482), *Paston Letters*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 6, item 983.

to upset this gender system by having too much perceived power, such as through territorial control, the emphasis on those women to be merciful would be all the more necessary. The assumption that the battle scenes would not be entertaining or of interest to women reader/listeners is then a misogynistic simplification of the literary tastes of women that has unfortunately persisted into modern scholarship, especially considering the extant evidence of women owning diverse texts, including siege romances, chronicles, and mirrors for princes, along with more typically “female” works.

3.4 The Neville Connection

Having argued that women were the implied audience of the *Awntyrs*, I would now like to consider the “ideal” reader of the poem. I argue that Joan Neville, *née* Beaufort (d. 1440), Countess of Westmorland, represents the ideal imagined reader of the text, building on the work of several scholars who have previously associated the *Awntyrs* with the Neville family. Andrew Breeze connects the text to Joan’s son-in-law, Richard, Duke of York (d. 1460), on the basis that the lands granted to Sir Galeron at the end of the poem were all either held by the Duke or in the possession of his guardians and relatives.¹¹² The dialectal evidence also places the poem’s authorial holograph in Cumberland, which, at the time of the poem’s composition, was under the control of Ralph Neville, the Count of Westmorland and Joan’s husband. Rosamund Allen builds on this evidence by suggesting that, rather than Richard or Ralph, Joan was more likely to have commissioned the text.¹¹³ Joan was the illegitimate-made-legitimate daughter of John of Gaunt and his mistress Katherine Swynford and Allen interprets the poem’s insinuation of female infidelity as suggestive of Joan’s own parentage. Although this evidence remains speculative, when the text’s geo-political contexts,

¹¹² Breeze, ‘Caerphilly, Oysterlow, and Wexford’, pp. 63-68.

¹¹³ Allen, ‘Place-Names’, pp. 181-98.

dialect and focus on matrilineal relationships are taken into consideration, Joan can be considered the ideal reader. There is evidence that Joan owned several literary texts, including: a copy of the French Arthurian romance *Sir Tristram* bequeathed to her by her brother Thomas duke of Exeter at his death in 1426; a copy of Nicholas Love's English translation of the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes vitae Christi*; a copy of *Speculum vitae*, also in English; and a book containing *The Chronicles of Jerusalem* and *Godfrey de Bouillon*, both of which belong to the same tradition of the Nine Worthies as the source text of the *Awntyrs*.¹¹⁴ It is worth considering then, whether Joan could have been the intended audience for the *Awntyrs*, and if so, how this would change our interpretation of the text. For example, Joan's decision to be laid to rest in Lincoln cathedral beside her mother, rather than with either of her husbands, shows how significant this relationship was to Joan and lends greater meaning to our interpretation of the *memento mori* theme present in the *Awntyrs*.

At the time that the *Awntyrs* was written, Joan was not only the wealthiest woman in Cumberland, but one of the most powerful and influential magnates of England, with a substantial social network. This network would be the perfect model for the widespread distribution of literature and so it is reasonable that a poet would seek out her patronage. Indeed, Thomas Hoccleve dedicated one of his complaints to the countess and ended his *Tale of Jonathas and Fellicula* with the envoy:

Go, smal book | to the noble excellence
 Of my lady | of Westmerland | and seye,
 Hir humble seruant | with al reuerence
 Him recommandith vnto hir noble eye;
 And byseeche hire | on my behalue & preye,
 Thee to receyue for hire owne right;
 And looke thou | in al manere weye
 To plesse hir wommanhede | do thy might
 Humble seruant
 To your gracious

¹¹⁴ Cavanaugh, 'Books Privately Owned', p. 606.

Noblesse
T: Hoccleue.¹¹⁵

Hoccleve produced for Joan a work that positively depicts women and their concerns, writing ‘in honour and plesance of yow ladyes’. Though declaring his intended audience is firstly his lady, Joan Neville, the rhetoric used by Hoccleve can also be read in the speech of Galeron’s lover in her appeal to Gaynour, as discussed earlier. Hoccleve, like Galeron’s lover, appeals to the lady’s ‘wommanhede’, her ‘owne right’ and her ‘might’, employing terms to appeal to the woman in power. Jennifer Summit in her discussion of William Caxton and female patronage asks that we consider:

[...] what particular use Caxton may have sought in a patron who was a woman: that is, to consider what literary authority a woman patron may have lent him, and what influence she might have been expected to wield over prospective readers.¹¹⁶

We can ask these same questions of Hoccleve in his appeal to the Countess of Westmorland. His envoy conceals an expectation that the text will be widely distributed. Hoccleve is engaging in a commercial convention, appealing to a wealthy female patron in the hopes of a wide reception. The same conventions were later used by Caxton in his printing of romance.¹¹⁷ This is exemplified by Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby (d. 1509) and her patronage of *Blanchardine and Eglantine*, one of Caxton’s earliest printed texts.¹¹⁸ Felicity Riddy has previously suggested that the print-run of *Blanchardine and Eglantine* can be compared to that of Caxton’s *Le Morte Darthur*, which Lotte Hellinga estimates at 500 copies.¹¹⁹ Despite being produced in such large numbers, both romances have suffered immense losses; *Le Morte Darthur* surviving in two copies and two fragments, and *Blanchardine and*

¹¹⁵ As quoted in Jambeck, ‘Patterns of Women’s Literary Patronage’, p. 242.

¹¹⁶ Jennifer Summit, ‘William Caxton, Margaret Beaufort and the Romance of Female Patronage’, *Women, the Book and the Worldly*, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), pp. 151-65 (pp. 155-56).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ *Blanchardine and Eglantine* (London: William Caxton, 1490), *STC*, 2nd ed. 3124.

¹¹⁹ Felicity Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), p. 8; Lotte Hellinga as quoted by Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory*, p. 8, fn. 24.

Eglantine as just two fragments. The implications of such figures on manuscript booklets of Middle English romance is significant. Even if we cannot establish that such losses were possible for manuscript versions of these texts, that romances with female patrons were produced and consumed in such high numbers suggests that there was an established desire for texts that appealed to female audiences. Margaret, as a patron of romance, was participating in the same literary practices as generations of women before her; her mother-in-law Anne Neville (d. 1480) was the likely owner of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, and Anne's own mother, Joan Neville, was a patron of Hoccleve, as indicated by the above envoy.¹²⁰ These women were all politically and socially powerful, with extensive cultural influence. Their engagement with Middle English romance is suggestive of its wider circulation. It is reasonable then that the Countess could be the intended audience of *Awntyrs*, as a woman of both local and national influence with the resources to share the text to her wider affinity.

Previous studies into the Nevilles have focused primarily on the social, political, and military networks of the powerful men in the family. These accounts have been written by male historians, who have overlooked the roles performed by women in this context. For example, Charles Robert Young in *The Making of the Neville Family in England, 1166-1400* (1996) asserts that one of the strengths of the family was 'the [male] network of cooperative relationships that extended horizontally beyond county lines.' Young also outlines the vertical enlargement of these networks, the influence of the family extended through 'affinities of dependants who helped spread the Neville influence as they followed the lead of their lords.'¹²¹ However, Joan Neville as Countess of Westmorland was instrumental in extending her family's network. The marriages she

¹²⁰ See: Jambeck, 'Patterns of Women's Literary Patronage', pp. 240-41.

¹²¹ Charles Robert Young, *The Making of the Neville Family in England, 1166-1400* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1996), p. 142, p. 144.

arranged for her children significantly increased her family's power, wealth and influence throughout Britain in what J. R. Lander has described as 'the most amazing series of child marriages in English history', consisting of eleven marriages between 1413-36. Several of Joan's sons gained their wealth and titles through marriages, whilst her daughter Cecily became mother to two Kings of England. Joan also played a part in orchestrating the marriage of her niece Jane Beaufort to James I of Scotland in the New Year of 1424. The newlyweds' visit to Joan's household during this period would have been the perfect occasion for the Neville household to perform a poem such as the *Awntyrs*, a romance which ends with the happy wedding ceremony of a beautiful lady and a Scottish knight.¹²² This connection would also potentially account for the poem's transmission into Scotland during the fifteenth century, as discussed in Chapter 2. Within the Neville family, there are numerous examples of women being active in the management of their estates. Anne Neville (d. 1480) controlled the estates of one of Britain's wealthiest men, Humphrey Stafford, Earl of Stafford and Duke of Buckingham (d. 1460). Extant day books detailing the running of these estates record Anne's 'skilful control of all of the Stafford estates until her son came of age', with Anne continuing to manage the substantial portion of lands that had come to her via her jointure. As cited in Jambeck, 'surviving documents record twenty-three attempts to recover debts as well as her suit against the king, who had "claimed the wardship of one of her vassals"'. Her sister, Cecily Neville (d. 1495), following the death of her husband in 1460, likewise handled the day-to-day business of her estates as Duchess of York, living as a powerful and wealthy widow for over thirty years.¹²³ It stands to reason that the Neville women would have likewise needed affinities of dependents and officials to deal with the business of running their estates, as well as horizontal networks consisting of friends

¹²² J. R. Lander, 'Marriage and Politics in the Fifteenth Century: the Nevilles and the Wydevilles', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 36.94 (1963), 119-52 (p. 121).

¹²³ Jambeck, 'Patterns of Women's Literary Patronage', pp. 239-40.

and family members. These affinities provided the perfect network for the sharing of texts, as has been argued by Ryan Perry in his study of the transmission of religious texts. Perry connects the gentry owners of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* to the magnates known to be engaging with this work.¹²⁴ These affinities can likewise provide a potential mode of transmission for the *Awntyrs*, from its potential patron Joan Neville to the gentry and mercantile audiences represented by the surviving manuscript record.

The *Awntyrs* can be connected to texts engaged with by the prominent women of the Neville family. The version of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* likely owned by Anne Neville (d. 1480) was copied by a scribe working in London and a member of the same social network as the scribe of both the *Troilus and Criseyde* extant in London, BL, MS Harley 3943 and the *Awntyrs* which survives in Lambeth 491a.¹²⁵ Through the texts copied by the Lambeth 491a scribe, we can see the *Awntyrs* circulating in the same literary and textual community as Chaucer's *Troilus*. Both texts appealed to their female audiences, who as readers and patrons of romance contributed to the wider circulation of these poems. The motives of Hoccleve in seeking out Joan Neville as a patron for his text may have been shared by the anonymous poet of the *Awntyrs*, and though it cannot be proven with any certainty that Joan was the intended reader of the *Awntyrs*, she can be seen as an ideal reader whose literary and political activities make her perfectly positioned to share this text, as Gaynour does at the end of the *Awntyrs*, with 'Dukes Erles Baronns and bechoppes of the beste | Thurghe alle yglande' (*Awntyrs* Lincoln 91, 583-84). By entertaining the idea that Joan could have been the patron of this poem, we can understand how the *Awntyrs* could have come to be a "bestseller", its cultural

¹²⁴ Perry, "some sprytuall matter", pp. 96-106.

¹²⁵ Jambeck, 'Patterns of Women's Literary Patronage', p. 241. For discussions of the scribes of Chaucer, see: Warner, *Chaucer's Scribes*.

importance and literary significance being far greater than the sum of its four surviving manuscript copies.

3.5 Conclusion

The Awntyrs off Arthure constructs an imagined literary community of women, a diverse collective audience of elite, urban, mercantile, gentry, religious and lay. Gaynour is placed as the central, uniting force of the poem, and it is through her character that conventional attitudes to women's sexuality and spirituality are communicated. Gaynour functions as an exemplar of the beautiful maiden, the (pre)adulterous woman, the dutiful wife and intercessory queen in an extensive re-gendering of pre-existing popular textual traditions, with which the audience is expected to be familiar, suggesting women were avid readers not only of romance, but of saints' lives, devotional texts, and exempla. That women actively participated in literary networks is demonstrated in manuscript and testamentary evidence, with thematically related texts being circulated between religious communities of women and their secular family members and friends. Though the poem concludes with the preservation of existing power structures, that of an idealised, patriarchal chivalry, women still act with agency throughout. Their actions drive the narrative forward and their acts of speech frame the action. The women's dialogue creates space for subversive and resistive readings, whilst simultaneously promoting the inherent misogynistic instructions of a woman's good conduct in a conventional rehearsing of the Seven Works of Mercy. The association of women with speech, with spiritual instruction and insight functioning as a balance to the extreme, destructive actions of men, presents the audience with a positive portrayal of women, deeply sympathetic to their interests and desires without directly challenging established gender structures. That it was widely received by diverse audiences is of little surprise.

Elizabeth Robertson has argued that '[p]lacing feminist questions at the center of archival research can help reveal conditions and experiences of women in even the most seemingly intractable and unyielding records.'¹²⁶ Similarly, Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski have argued that we must broaden the conventional understanding of power as public authority, to focus on 'distinctively female forms of exerting influence' to better demonstrate how and when female agency occurred.¹²⁷ Literary analysis allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complex ways women engaged with text. By reading the *Awntyrs* for its fictional, implied and intended audiences we can see the audiences the text imagines for itself and can move closer to an understanding of the actual reader/listeners of the poem. The fictional and implied audience of the *Awntyrs* reveals women engaging with multiple texts, reading and reciting them, retelling romances and offering spiritual teaching. I suggest that the uses represented by the fictional and implied audiences of the poem are also representative of the ways in which actual audiences used this text: read collectively and circulated in an ephemeral material form, as small, paper booklets unlikely to be recorded in wills or inventories, as single-text items that were passed on perhaps from mother to daughter, sister to sister. In this chapter, I have outlined the imagined literary community of women to whom this text speaks as can be constructed through a critical literary analysis of the poem's fictional and implied audience. I have also considered the ideal and potentially intended readers of the text, imagining Joan Neville as the most likely patron of the *Awntyrs*. The following chapter considers the textual communities of this poem through a study of its four extant manuscripts and explores how the literary communities discussed here relate

¹²⁶ Robertson, 'Medieval Feminism', p. 76.

¹²⁷ Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, 'A New Economy of Power Relations: Female Agency in the Middle Ages', *Gendering The Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 1-16 (p. 2).

to the actual audiences of the poem, as far as they are represented by the surviving material record.

CHAPTER 4 Textual Communities of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*

The actual audiences of *The Awntyrs off Arthure* are represented by four surviving manuscripts which span a generation of scribes, owners, readers and listeners, the production of these texts dating from c. 1425-80. An examination of the textual communities of this corpus reveals the diverse ways people engaged with Middle English Arthurian romance at different points in time and in different geographical contexts. By examining and interpreting both the codicological and biobibliographical evidence, this chapter constructs the textual communities of the *Awntyrs* to reveal not just *who* may have engaged with the same physical object, that is the material text itself, but *how* they interacted with it, in order to answer the central question of this thesis: why have only four manuscript versions of the *Awntyrs* survived? Felicity Riddy was the first to apply the term ‘textual community’ in a context of medieval readership in her discussion of Arthurian literature. Riddy defines the term as:

the community of people who read the same text, who are brought together simply by the act of reading (or hearing); a community which the text itself creates insofar as it seeks an audience. [...] a textual community may be a social community, but it is also the community of those who do not know one another but who read the same book, a community of the living and the dead.¹

Riddy thus gives the text agency in defining its audience, allowing for the study of audience through the examination of the text and its material contexts. Riddy further discusses the existence of subcultures within these communities, such as the clerical-academic, for example, or subcultures as defined by boundaries of class or gender.² This definition is useful in the discussion of late-medieval literary culture, particularly in the discussion of the networks in which texts could be transmitted, which necessitate a social community. It is worth noting however, that the boundaries that separate subcultures are conceptual, and texts can exist within as well as across different subcultures. In this

¹ Felicity Riddy, ‘Reading for England’, p. 315.

² Ibid, p. 317.

chapter, I will consider each of the manuscripts in turn, focusing on how they were produced and used by the people who encountered them. Following the historical materialism of Bahr and the method of cultural mapping outlined in Chapter 1, ‘Critical Methods’, I will necessarily focus on certain aspects of each book’s use that represents specific moments of its *process*. This is in part determined by the evidence that remains and in part to demonstrate the variety of ways audiences engaged with the *Awntyrs* that can be discerned from the extant manuscripts. Documentary evidence then fleshes out the social networks related to these four manuscripts and extends the textual communities to which the *Awntyrs* belonged, connecting the poem to its wider social, literary and cultural networks.

I first focus on the earliest extant copy, Lambeth 491a, before turning to the latest extant version, Oxford Douce 324. This is because their shared connection to the same textual communities and same subcultures in London shows the importance of the *Awntyrs* as a London text, its place in this literary and social context having never been fully identified. Whereas the two London manuscripts represent the circulation of the *Awntyrs* in a newly considered context, I compare the remaining two manuscripts to challenge existing conceptions of the “typical” expected reception contexts and audiences of Arthurian romance. Lincoln 91 and Princeton Taylor 9 were both produced in the mid-fifteenth century and came to be compiled into larger books containing multiple Arthurian texts including the *Awntyrs*. A comparison of the *Awntyrs* in these two books reveals changing audience engagement with the poem and explores how this is determined by the text’s changing material form. The chapter is divided into two halves, each of which explores similar comparisons: a large miscellaneous book that has a large body of accompanying scholarship, an identified scribe and a more established historical social network compared with a much smaller item, copied by an unknown scribe and the recipient of much less scholarly attention. Lastly, this chapter considers the one feature all four manuscripts

share, the booklet, and considers the implications of the booklet on the text's circulation and survival.

4.1 London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a

By the beginning of the fifteenth century, London had developed as a centre for book trade. In *London Literature 1300-1380*, Ralph Hanna discusses the development of London from a regional centre of book production, akin to those operating in York and Lincolnshire, to a more commercial centre by c. 1400, engaged in the export of literature as well as in the increased production of texts for local audiences.³ The commercial production of vernacular texts was, according to Andrew Taylor, also beginning to rely on a predictable readership by the fifteenth century, with a move toward a 'more open market.'⁴ It is in this environment that Lambeth 491a, the earliest extant copy of the *Awntyrs*, was produced by a clerk in c. 1425-35. By the time *Awntyrs* is being copied into this codex, it is however already a witness to a 'corrupt' or deviating tradition.⁵ According to an analysis of the four texts, all of the surviving copies of *Awntyrs* derive from an archetype already containing errors inconsistent with the rhyme scheme and alliterative pattern of the authorial text.⁶ This indicates that multiple versions of the poem were already in circulation by the date of Lambeth 491a's compilation, imported to the capital almost immediately after its creation. It is likely too, that once present in London, the text was then exported back out of the city to various more provincial textual communities whilst continuing to be circulated and copied in London.

The date of Lambeth 491a's production can be determined with relative confidence due to the identification of the manuscript's scribe. The hand of this scribe, as recognised by Ralph Hanna, has been located in three literary manuscripts:

³ Hanna, *London Literature*, pp. 1-16.

⁴ Taylor, 'Authors, Scribes, Patrons and Books', p. 359.

⁵ See Ch. 2.4 'Corruption, Discordances and the Rejection of the Stemma'.

⁶ *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, pp. 52-53.

London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a (a):⁷

1. The Prose *Brut*: *IPMEP* 374, *Manual* 8.XXI.10; fols 1r-205v
2. *The Siege of Jerusalem*: *DIMEV* 2651, *Manual* 1.I.107; fols 206r-27v
3. *The Three Kings of Cologne*: *IPMEP* 290; fols 228r-74v
4. *The Awntyrs of Arthure*: *DIMEV* 2628; fols 275r-86v
5. *The Book of Hunting*: *DIMEV* 6507; fols 287r-90v

San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 114:

1. William Langland *Piers Plowman*: *DIMEV* 2459; *Manual* 7.XVIII.1-20; fols 1r-130v
2. *Mandeville's Travels*: *IPMEP* 233, *Manual* 7.XIX.5; fols 131r-84v
3. Alliterative *Susanna*: *DIMEV* 5607; *Manual* 2.IV.26; fols 184v-90v
4. Excerpt of *The Three Kings of Cologne*: *IPMEP* 290; fols 190v-92v
5. Geoffrey Chaucer *Troilus and Criseyde*: *DIMEV* 5248, Wells 16.32; fols 193r-318v
6. Middle English translation of Peter Ceffons *Epistola Luciferi and Geros*: *IPMEP* 444; fols 319r-25v

London, BL, MS Harley 3943 (part 1):

1. Geoffrey Chaucer *Troilus and Criseyde*: *DIMEV* 5248; Wells 16.32; fols 2r-7v, 9r-56v, 63r-67v

The scribe's distinct 'splayed anglicana' is also evident in: London Letter Book I, written in 1418-19; in the *Liber Albus* compiled by John Carpenter in 1419; and in the Goldsmiths' Register prepared in 1418, as argued by Linne R. Mooney and Estelle Stubbs, who identify the scribe of Lambeth 491a as Richard Osbarn, controller or clerk of the chamber at the London Guildhall from 1400-37.⁸ Mooney and Stubbs base their identification on the appearance of the scribal hand in the London Letter Book I, the *Liber Albus* and on Osbarn's professional connection to John Carpenter. However, Lawrence Warner has recently challenged this observation, arguing that it is more likely to have been a junior clerk producing these laborious documents: '[t]he entries into the Goldsmith's Register are

⁷ For a full manuscript description, collation and transcription of London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a see appendix B.

⁸ Mooney and Stubbs, *Scribes and the City*, p. 18, p. 25.

the products of a full-time, professional copyist, and it is difficult to imagine someone like Osborn abandoning his professional responsibilities on its behalf.⁹ Whilst agreeing that the above works are copied by the same hand, Warner also expands the body of work attributable to this scribe, whom he refers to simply as the HM 114 scribe, claiming that he was responsible for ‘perhaps the greatest, in both quality and quantity, recording and preservation of lives and beliefs of the men and women of medieval England and beyond.’¹⁰ Warner’s deconstruction of Mooney and Stubbs’ argument is convincing, and the expansion of the body of work attributed to this scribe is exciting, as Warner’s reframing of the scribe’s work places the *Awntyrs*, along with the poetry of Chaucer and Langland, in the hands of a junior official, professional scribe and recorder of ‘the decisions, activities, and traditions’ of medieval London.¹¹

The date of Lambeth 491a can further be determined from the replication of texts within the scribe’s three known literary manuscripts. Huntington HM 114 appears to be the latest surviving production: it is copied into later paper stocks than those found in Lambeth 491a, which according to Hanna’s assessment are dated to the 1410’s.¹² The scribe appears to have supplemented part of the Huntington HM 114’s *Mandeville’s Travels* with an excerpt of the *Three Kings of Cologne* text found in Lambeth 491a. Huntington HM 114 also includes a copy of Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* corrected against the version found in the unfinished BL Harley 3943. At least two texts of Huntington HM 114 were therefore copied after the production of both Lambeth 491a and BL Harley 3943. Arguing that Lambeth 491a was complete before the scribe began working on Huntington HM 114, and that the *Awntyrs* poem was originally composed in c. 1424-25, thus dates the production and compilation of Lambeth 491a to sometime c. 1425-35. This dating, however, relies on

⁹ Warner, *Chaucer’s Scribes*, p. 77.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 77, pp. 72-95.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 91.

¹² Ralph Hanna, ‘The Scribe of Huntington HM 114’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 42 (1989), 120-33 (p. 130-31).

the assumption that the books (and the texts within them) were produced consecutively. The possibility of the scribe working on multiple manuscripts simultaneously over a relatively long period should not altogether be ruled out, especially considering the use of booklets in his compilations. The scribe could have begun copying the other texts of Lambeth 491a before even acquiring the *Awntyrs* or *The Book of Hunting*, which occur together in a separate booklet at the very end of the manuscript. Thus, the dating of c. 1425-35 can only be applied with confidence to the period in which the last two texts were copied, as well as representing the time in which all the texts of Lambeth 491a were likely bound together to form the present codex. Mooney and Stubbs' identification of the scribe as Richard Osbarn would suggest that these literary manuscripts were produced whilst he was working as the clerk of the chamber, Osbarn's career ending with his death in 1437. This would mean that he was producing these literary manuscripts whilst still actively working in the Guildhall. Whilst this is by no means impossible, Warner's argument that these manuscripts were produced by a junior clerk after he had retired, seems more likely.

The relatively detailed evidence available that relates to the HM 114/Lambeth 491a scribe shows a prolific copyist working in multiple locations in the city of London, connected to both the Guildhall and the Goldsmiths' company, copying multiple literary texts, including the 'bestseller', the Middle English prose *Brut* and other in-demand texts, such as Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. The evidence surrounding his wider copying practices indicates that he was potentially producing texts as part of a commercial initiative – that is, with the scribe found to be producing duplicate copies of these same texts, as is the case for his *Troilus and Criseyde*. The material he is using suggests a degree of thriftiness: the use of mixed-media quires, with vellum leaves serving as the inner and outer bifolia for each quire, means that he can produce the manuscripts largely using the cheaper – though less durable – paper, protecting his quires which perhaps lay unbound with the sparing use of parchment. There are also distinctions

between the qualities of his productions; both Lambeth 491a and Huntington HM 114 are mixed paper and parchment, written in a more cramped hand and Lambeth 491a revealing a particularly economical use of material, with many margins of the vellum leaves cut away, perhaps to be repurposed. Strips of vellum could be used to reinforce the bindings of paper quires, for example. In contrast, BL Harley 3943 presents a more luxurious product; written entirely on parchment, in a less cramped hand, with spacing added between the poem's stanzas. This appears to have been written as a bespoke commission for a patron yet is abandoned by the scribe before the text of *Troilus and Criseyde* is complete. His other manuscripts, therefore, may represent a different kind of scribal imperative. It seems possible, if not likely, that these books served as exemplars for the scribe himself. An argument that has been made previously by Mooney and Stubbs, who suggest that the 'mixed paper-and-parchment mss were intended to serve as exemplars, since the *Troilus* booklet remained in Osborn's possession long enough for him to make the corrections when another, more complete, copy of the poem crossed his desk.'¹³

A detailed codicological analysis of the process of the text's production reveals that the scribe of Lambeth 491a produced the *Awntyrs* as an independent booklet, a material form that could allow for the easy circulation of the text and support the commercial reproduction of the poem. Ralph Hanna provides a detailed collation of Lambeth 491a in the 2003 edition of *The Siege of Jerusalem*, co-edited with David Lawton.¹⁴ Hanna has argued that the codex is formed of three discrete booklets: the first containing the prose *Brut* and the beginning of *The Siege of Jerusalem*; the second being the concluded *The Siege of Jerusalem*, completed after what is according to Hanna a lapsed period of copying, followed by prose text *The Three Kings of Cologne*; into a third and final booklet the scribe then copies *The Awntyrs off Arthure* and *The Book of Hunting*. This

¹³ Mooney and Stubbs, *Scribes and the City*, p. 32.

¹⁴ *The Siege of Jerusalem*, ed. by Ralph Hanna and David Lawton, EETS orig. ser. 320 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. xx-xxi.

however contradicts Hanna's own definition of a "booklet". The copying of *The Siege of Jerusalem* into the end of the booklet containing the *Brut*, and its continuation into a second, defies the notion of the booklet as a coherent textual unit, being able to circulate independently. Furthermore, there is no significant change to the way in which the scribe copies his text; the quire signatures are continuous and consistent, as are the catchwords, and the manuscript is produced in regular quires of sixteen, with vellum forming the outer and innermost leaves. Nor is there tangible material evidence for a break in production during the copying of *The Siege* text. Rather, *The Siege of Jerusalem* is the only complete text of this section of the manuscript. Although the damage to the beginning of the Middle English prose *Brut* (lacking its first quire) may have occurred at a later stage – after the original binding of the codex – the damage to the end of *The Three Kings of Cologne* (lacking the final three folios) certainly supports the idea that the three texts: the prose *Brut*; *The Siege of Jerusalem*; and *The Three Kings of Cologne*, formed a distinct textual unit. These texts present a collection of thematically similar items, all three texts belonging to the genre of historical poetry, which received a surge in popularity amongst London audiences in the fifteenth century.¹⁵ The losses to the beginning and end of this booklet would further suggest that it remained unbound for a significant enough amount of time to become damaged, perhaps indicating that it circulated as a booklet in its unbound form, protected only by its vellum outer-leaves.

The final two texts of Lambeth 491a, *The Awntyrs off Arthure* and *The Book of Hunting*, also form a distinct textual unit or booklet, of likewise thematically similar material; both texts concerned with aristocratic leisure and chivalric behaviour. Hanna recognises this in his collation in which he determines that there are twenty-one quires in total, each of sixteen folios, with *Awntyrs* and *The Book of Hunting* occurring in the very

¹⁵ Malcolm Hebron, *The Medieval Siege: Theme and Image in Middle English Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 14; Sargent, 'What Do the Numbers Mean?', p. 206.

last quire (fig. 4.1). Based on evidence within the manuscript I would conversely argue that the final two texts appear instead in two quires, each of eight folios, making the codex twenty-two quires in total and signalling a significant break in the scribe's mode of copying (fig. 4.2). The damage to the end of the preceding text, *The Three Kings of Cologne* (fig. 4.2, Quire XX) and the considerable wear to the opening recto of *Awntyrs* – one of the dirtiest folios of the codex – supports this assessment. This damage would further indicate that this smaller booklet, containing *Awntyrs* and *The Book of Hunting*, was added to the historical booklet after some time being independent of one another, being bound into the present manuscript at a later date. The appearance of a new system of quire signatures would appear to confirm the identification of the final booklet, with folio 284 recto clearly bearing an *Aii* signature (fig. 4.3).

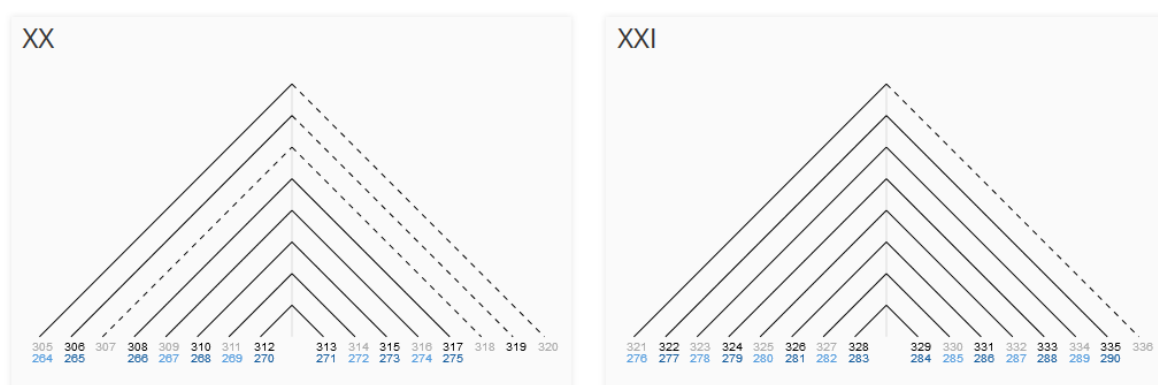


Fig. 4.1: Representation of Hanna's Collation of fols 264-90 in London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a, as given in Ralph Hanna and David Lawton (eds) *The Siege of Jerusalem* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. xx-xxiii

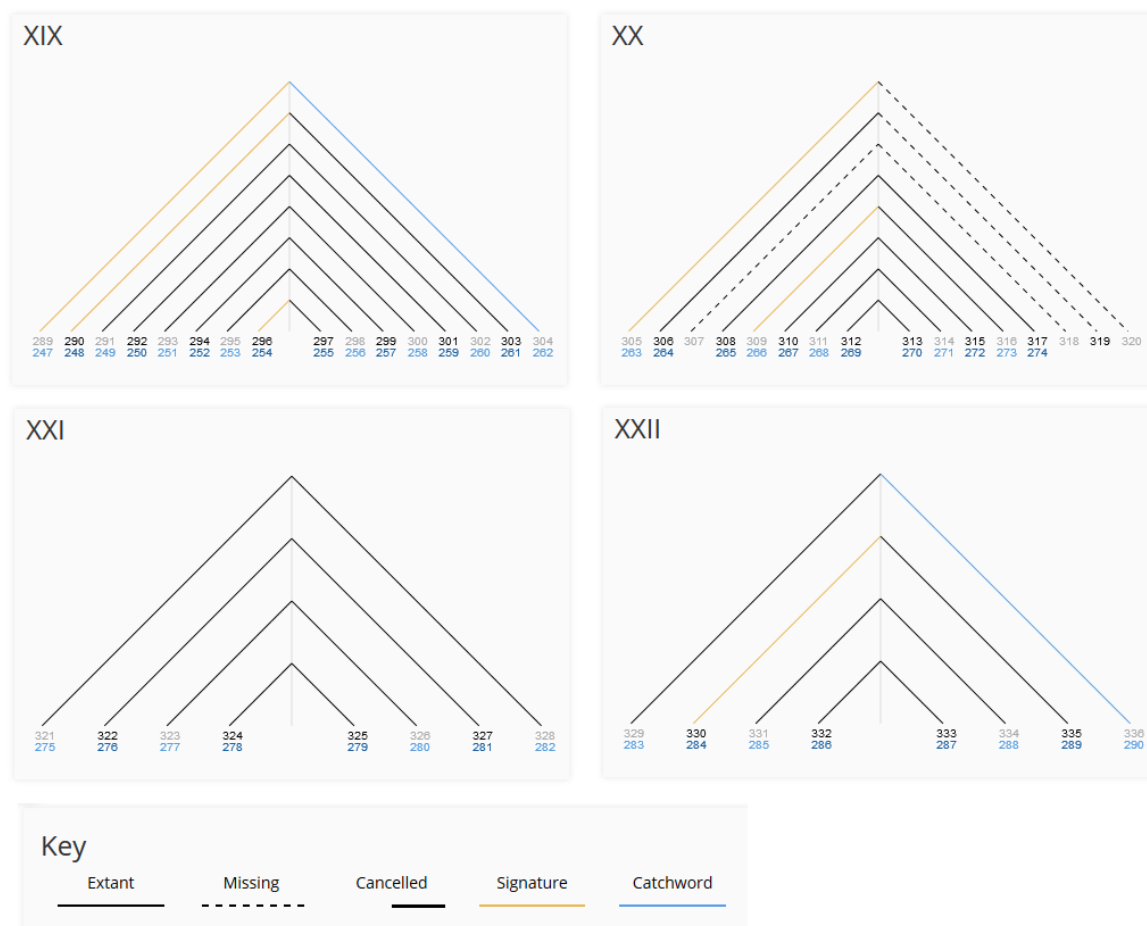


Fig. 4.2: My collation of fols 247-90 in London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a

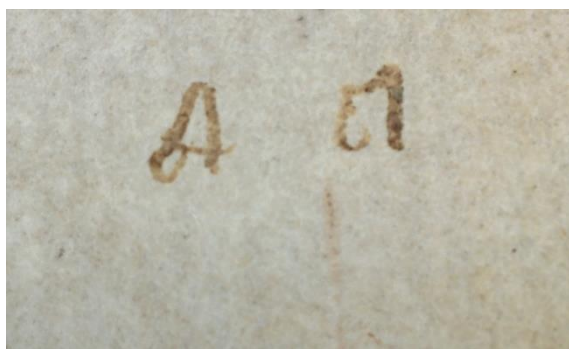


Fig. 4.3: Quire Signature Aii, fol. 284r, lower right-hand margin, in London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a

The previous texts of the historical booklet contain the quire signatures *a-v*, the last quire signature of that booklet appearing on folio 266 recto (fig. 4.3, Quire XX). If the following quire did represent a continuation of the regular sixteen-folio quires then it would logically continue the quire signatures, presenting the letter *w*. The *Aii* signature, in Hanna's

collation, would appear on the ninth folio of the sixteen-folio quire. However, if it is actually two gatherings of eight folios, as I am proposing, then it appears instead on the second leaf of the last quire (fig. 4.3, Quire XXII). This both matches the signature and is more consistent with scribal practices where quire signatures appear on the recto of folios in the first half of the quire. The final two texts produced in this format provide substantial evidence to consider the *Awntyrs* and *The Book of Hunting* circulating as an independent booklet. The break from a regular sixteen-folio construction may suggest that the scribe was copying the *Awntyrs* directly from an exemplar of a similar arrangement, imitating its layout and following a consistent number of thirty lines to a page. In total, the *Awntyrs* of Lambeth 491a, occurring in folios 275 recto-286 verso, takes up twelve folios over two quires of eight.

The scribe's intention to produce a good quality text, potentially for his own use as an exemplar, is suggested by his textual editing, actively correcting the texts he copied. This is most apparent in the *Troilus* that appears in Huntington HM 114, but is also evident in a crucial line of the *Awntyrs*. At line 644 of folio 285 verso the scribe alters the reading 'he callid toward þe knyght on height þ[er] he stode', correcting the word 'knyght' to 'kyng' which appears above the original word (fig. 4.4). The text reads 'kyng' at this line in all other versions of the poem.¹⁶

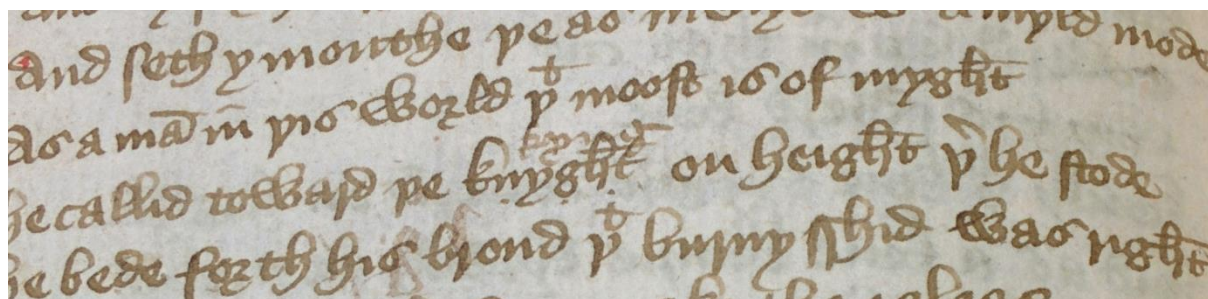


Fig. 4.4: Scribal correction, folio 285v, London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a

¹⁶ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, p. 185, line 644.

This could be the scribe's error in the transmitting of his exemplar text, but the correction still provides evidence of the scribe making an effort to produce a 'best reading', less concerned with the decorum of the page than he is with the accuracy of his copy. Gates argues in his edition that Lambeth 491a is 'the least satisfactory text of the poem' for several reasons: its dialectal remove from the poem's original composition; changes to specific geographical references; and numerous conscious substitutions. These substitutions, Gates argues, frequently result in a 'loss of a rhyme, link, or alliterating syllable'.¹⁷ However, the scribe appears to be highly experienced, familiar with alliterative texts, having copied several alliterative poems. For example, he recognises the rare word *wonges* in line 87 'wonges ful wete', where each of the other three versions substitute it, further suggesting it is not a lack of his understanding which forces the changes made to the text of *Awntyrs*.¹⁸ Rather, his efforts to correct the texts against other versions shows a diligence to provide the best version of the poem, suggesting that these conscious substitutions may have had a purpose, potentially to make the text more palatable to the audience the scribe expects the poem will be circulated amongst, which is to say a London reader, not unlike the scribe himself. Indeed, Warner's reassessment of the scribe to be a junior clerk, associated with the livery companies of London places him at the same social status as those whose names appear in the margins of the manuscripts.¹⁹ A known instance of the scribe engaged in commercial copying is his production of the Goldsmith's register in 1418.²⁰ The Huntington HM 114 and Lambeth 491a manuscripts, as his largest surviving literary outputs, rather than appearing to be commissions, represent inexpensive productions, produced in a more haphazard and disorganised way. Though copied by a highly-skilled scribe, the material features of Lambeth 491a, its codicology and textual formation, would suggest different types of intended and actual use, this book likely made

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁹ Warner, *Chaucer's Scribes*, p. 107.

²⁰ Mooney and Stubbs, *Scribes and the City*, p. 9.

for the scribe's own use as a collection of exemplar texts, as has been suggested by Mooney and Stubbs, who argue that the scribe was 'compiling texts for a library of exemplars (or for his own use) rather than fulfilling commissions for clients'.²¹ This 'own use' could have been to reproduce marketable texts for paying customers, keeping a collection of literature to hand that he knew London audiences would want. These manuscripts show then the potential demand of such texts as *Piers Plowman*, *Mandeville's Travels*, *The Siege of Jerusalem* and the prose *Brut* in London. The fact that *Awntyrs* is also produced in this context suggests that the scribe believed that there was a demand for this text in London in the early-fifteenth century.

The presence of an active community of readers for Arthurian romance in London has been established to some extent by Julia Boffey and Carol Meale in their study of London-produced manuscripts Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C 86 and London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 306, observing that '[o]f the twenty-five extant medieval manuscripts containing Arthurian works, eleven are known either to have been copied or to have been in circulation in the city'.²² Kathleen Scott has further identified a specifically mercantile literary subculture in London through an examination of book ownership within this group as documented in wills and manuscript inscriptions. Scott has argued that, although the evidence for lay-ownership of literary manuscripts is sparse, with only 5 per cent of the 2,286 wills studied mentioning books, there is 'a preponderance of ownership by merchants over gentry, lay clerks, and artisans.'²³ Anne Sutton has likewise examined wills to identify the ownership of books by Mercers, with 17 per cent of the 227

²¹ Mooney and Stubbs, *Scribes and the City*, p. 35.

²² Julia Boffey and Carol M. Meale, 'Selecting the Text: Rawlinson C. 86 and Some Other Books for London Readers', *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts: Essays Celebrating the Publication of A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English*, ed. by Felicity Riddy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 143-69 (p. 161).

²³ Kathleen L. Scott, 'Past Ownership: Evidence of Book Ownership by English Merchants in the Later Middle Ages', *Makers and Users of Medieval Books: Essays in Honour of A. S. G. Edwards*, ed. by Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 150-77 (p. 153).

wills examined making reference to books owned, references occurring in 39 Mercers' wills in total.²⁴ This evidence gives us however, only a small insight into lay book ownership and remains essentially problematic. The comparative sample sizes of Sutton and Scott differ so vastly to make any valuable assertions of the greater ownership of books amongst Mercers unfeasible, especially when the survival of these documents is taken into account: of the 1,047 documented freemen of the Mercers' company during the period 1391-1464, only 22 per cent of their wills survive.²⁵ The results do not account for the varying individual social and economic statuses of the wills examined, nor for the varying cultural practices of different groups in regards to the naming or bequeathing of books in wills. Further problems arise from relying on wills, as Scott recognises, due to the partiality for wills to refer only to the most impressive tomes. Likewise, Sutton observes that religious books tend to be emphasised over 'frivolous romances'.²⁶ In addition, the categorisation of these individuals into merchants, clerks and gentry fails to account for the cross-societal circulation of texts within the capital and the social mobility occurring within London in the fifteenth century. Lastly, although these sources may provide evidence for book ownership, they do not provide evidence for how these books were read or used by their owners. These sources then, are not accurate representations of the reading practices of a London mercantile audience and additional evidence is therefore necessary to build a more representative picture of lay literary culture during the later medieval period.

More useful conclusions may be drawn from the books themselves, where they survive, and more specifically, by the examination of inscriptions in books by their owners. Boffey and Meale have demonstrated the efficacy of this kind of study through their

²⁴ Anne F. Sutton, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People, 1130-1578* (Aldershot: Ashgate: 2005), p. 169.

²⁵ Scott, 'Past Ownership', p. 153.

²⁶ Sutton, *The Mercery*, p. 168.

biobibliographical analysis of Rawlinson C. 86. They have firmly established the commercial London provenance of the Arthurian romance *The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell* and convincingly argued for its reception amongst a mercantile audience.²⁷ They provide evidence for connections between Rawlinson C. 86 and other known London manuscripts through instances of shared texts and material, thereby solidifying the book's London context. It is from inscriptions in these other manuscripts that connections between London merchants have been identified and a network of London readers constructed. Lambeth 491a has a similarly firm London provenance and an analysis of the inscriptions in the manuscript presents useful evidence not only of the later ownership of the book, but also for identifying a London textual community for the *Awntyrs*. Boffey and Meale have previously identified the inscriptions of Lambeth 491a as belonging to members of the Patsall family of Essex, and have highlighted the association of this family with the mercer Sir John Aleyn.²⁸ This information has, however, been confined to the footnotes, diminishing the importance of these connections, which deserve to be discussed in full for the information they provide about the circulation of *Awntyrs* in the context of fifteenth-and-sixteenth-century London.

Into the margins of Lambeth MS 491a are written multiple draft letters, practice alphabets and numerous names, all in the same late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth-century hand. The names include those of Thomas Patsall, John Patsall, Thomas Sharp, and John Pysant, with the names John and Thomas Patsall appearing most frequently (fig. 4.5).

²⁷ Boffey and Meale, 'Selecting the Text', pp. 143-69.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 163, fn. 63.

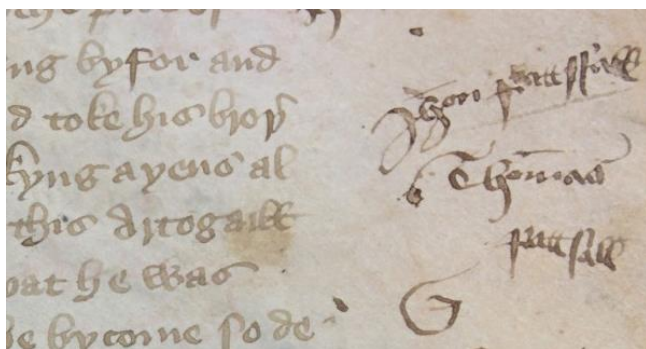


Fig. 4.5: London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a, fol. 8r: names Jhon Pattssall and Thomas Pattsall

This hand can be identified as belonging to Thomas Patsall, as he signs his name to some of the letters composed in the margins, suggesting he had access to the book for a considerable time. The letters appear to be written to various family members, including two addressed to his aunt ‘Besse Patsall’ requesting that she send him his books.²⁹ Thus we can infer that Thomas Patsall owned several books, including perhaps Lambeth 491a, and was actively participating in a socio-literary community. His treatment of Lambeth 491a is in keeping with the unsophisticated quality of the manuscript as he is using the available space to practice alphabets and letterforms of different scripts (fig. 4.6).

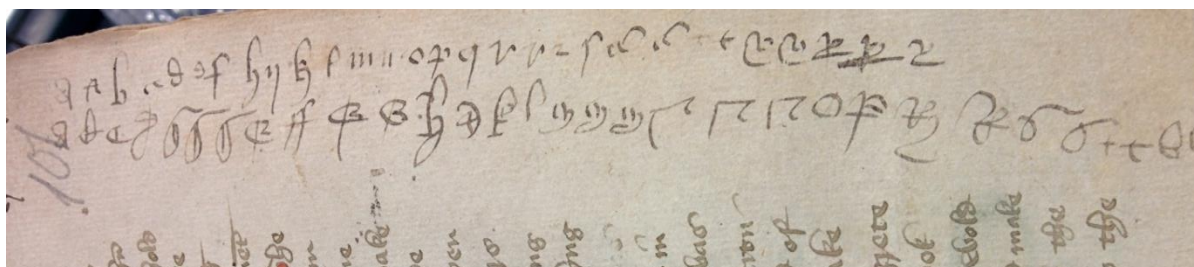


Fig. 4.6: Detail of practice letter forms, in London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a, fol. 101r, right-hand margin

²⁹ Land transactions dated 1558-1603 list an Elizabeth Wyman, widow of Walter Patsall, as plaintiff on behalf of her infant son George Patsall to obtain lands that were sometime the estate of Thomas Patshall, ‘now deceased’. The lands in question are the same listed in the will of Walter Patsall (d. 1527): Danbury, Little Baddow, Thaxted and Wimbish in the county of Essex. These later documents are unlikely to be referring to the same aunt Elizabeth (Besse) to whom Thomas writes, and certainly the Walter Patsall named in the will of 1527 is unlikely to be the deceased Walter referred to in 1558, but more likely a younger member belonging to a different branch of the same family. This younger Walter Patsall is perhaps the same who in 1526 is named as one of the ‘Clerkes of the Kynges Custom hous’ and granted the ‘freedom...of (the) felyship’ of the Mercers’ Company. See: TNA C 78/3/14; TNA C 78/27/1 in Appendix F.

The book is therefore continuing to be used as a personal, multipurpose volume and not simply read for the texts which it contains. Having recognised the hand to be Thomas Patsall, I shall now discuss not only his connection to Essex, but also the Patsall family's interactions with the city of London.

An inscription on folio 22v of Lambeth 491a reads 'tomas patsall dellyng in the tone of barakyng'. This is understood to be the town of Barking in Essex, located on the edge of east London close to the River Thames. Several documents firmly associate the Patsalls with the county of Essex. Thomas Patsall is the son of a Richard Patsall, and nephew to Walter Patsall (*Pateshale*) who, in his last will and testament, probate granted 3rd December 1527, bequeaths his extensive lands and properties to his nephew, Thomas, upon the death of his wife, Agnes.³⁰ This includes tenements in Thaxted, Wimbish, Danbury, and Little Baddow, all in the county of Essex. That Walter Patsall left his estate to his nephew would suggest he had no surviving children of his own to whom he could leave properties. Later sixteenth-century documents involving the Patsall family further establishes them as owning multiple properties in Essex, including references to tenements in Springfield, South Hanningfield, Ramsden, and Stock.³¹ Thomas Patsall's inscription in Lambeth 491a identifies him as a resident of Barking, Essex.

Barking was not a "provincial" backwater, but was ideally situated for trade in the city, with access to the Thames through an inlet to the River Roding. It likely offered more opportunities to purchase lands as a newly wealthy merchant and, as is evident from the documents discussed below, many of the Mercers of London did indeed own property and land in Essex.³² From Walter Patsall's will, it is evident that he was a merchant of some

³⁰ TNA, PROB 11/22/445, fols 202v-03v (probate granted 3 December 1527).

³¹ TNA C 78/3/14; TNA C 78/27/1.

³² W. R. Powell, *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 5* (London: Victoria County History, 1966), especially 'The Borough of Barking', pp. 235-48 (p. 251). There is evidence of the nuns of Barking Abbey engaging in textual activities, as discussed in Chapter 3, with connections between

wealth. The personal items he bequeaths include his best gown furred with ‘foynes’ (the fur of the beech martin), a fox-furred gown, and a camlet jacket given to a William Spilman, who is also to receive all of his ‘goodes movable and unmovable’. The mention of movable and immovable goods would suggest that Walter Patsall was involved in some kind of trade, perhaps in conjunction with William Spilman who was to inherit his wares.³³ Judging from his extensive estates and luxurious items of clothing – camlet being an exotic and expensive fabric from the Near East – it can be surmised that he was a successful merchant, conceivably involved in the lucrative cloth trade. There is a Walter Patsall (*Patsill*) entered into the Records of London’s Livery Companies in 1466 as a ‘new freeman and co-mercier’.³⁴ There are further records of a Walter Patsall (*Patesell*) acting as one of the wardens of the Mercer’s Company in 1479-80, along with Sir Henry Colet, Thomas Burgoyne and Thomas Shelly.³⁵ Although it is unlikely that these documents relate to the same Walter Patsall, given that if it were all the same Walter he would have lived well into his 80s, it seems likely to have been a direct relation. Anne Sutton’s research into Sir Henry Colet (c. 1430–1505) further identifies the Patsall family as potentially substantial merchants of the city of London. Sir Henry Colet, twice mayor of the city, twice MP for London in 1487 and 1489, and five times master of the Mercers’ Company, was, in 1479-80, acting as one of the four wardens of the Mercers’ Company along with Walter Patsall. Colet was known to have traded with the clothiers of Essex, and to have owned property himself in Colchester from 1485. He is further known to have been

William Baron, officer of the Royal Exchequer, and his niece, Petronilla Wrattisley, a nun of Dartford Priory to whom he gifts a book. This book was then transmitted to Barking Abbey, as discussed by Doyle. Such an example demonstrates that books were shared through social networks from members of the urban elite to women in local religious houses, with further evidence that these institutions could have been the nexus for the circulation of poetry.

³³ The antiquarian Henry Spelman (c. 1564-1641) comes into possession of California, Huntington Library, MS 114, which was copied by the same scribe as Lambeth, MS 491a. Spelman was potentially a later relation of the William Spilman mentioned in the will of Walter Patsall.

³⁴ ‘Walter Patsill’ (1466), ROLLCO

<http://londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCMM2308> [accessed 1 September 2018].

³⁵ Sutton, *The Mercery*, p. 557.

associated with the prominent merchant Geoffrey Boleyn, who is listed as the master and co-mercier acting as surety to Walter Patsall's admittance as freeman of the city in 1466.³⁶ Both Walter Patsall and Thomas Patsall are also connected to one of the most powerful mercers of the sixteenth century: John Aleyn (c. 1470–1544). Born in Thaxted Essex to Richard and Agnes Aleyn, John Aleyn was admitted to the Mercers' Company in 1497, elected warden of the Mercers' in 1509, and became master mercer in 1518. In 1525, John Aleyn is then elected as Mayor of the City of London and sworn in as a councillor to King Henry VIII in the same year. It is at the request of the king that he again serves as Mayor in 1535.³⁷ This is the same John Aleyn named by Walter Patsall (d. 1527) in his will as the eldest son of his wife Agnes by a previous marriage, and to whom Walter bequeaths a small tenement. Thomas Patsall can also be connected directly with John Aleyn through a transaction of land in Debden, Essex. Through their close connections to men like Sir Henry Colet and Sir John Aleyn, the Patsalls are also connected to the mercantile elite of London in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, engaged in the trade of luxurious items as members of the Mercers' Company.

As owners of Lambeth 491a, the Patsalls would clearly be engaging with a variety of texts, and from the marginal letters written by Thomas Patsall asking 'so oftyen... for [his] bokis' it is clear that their literary activities can be extended beyond the limits of the manuscript. Furthermore, the original production contexts of the manuscript, written and compiled by a clerk and literary scribe of the city, one with multiple associations with the livery companies of London, make it possible that the manuscript passed to the Patsalls through the hands of friends and acquaintances trading in the city as members of the same social and cultural network, through whom the Patsalls could acquire multiple texts and

³⁶ Ibid., p. 221, pp. 230-34.

³⁷ Elizabeth Lane Furdell, 'Allen, Sir John (c. 1470–1544)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/68011>> [accessed 22 January 2016].

manuscripts. Lawrence Warner's distancing of Lambeth 491a from Richard Osbarn allows us to also consider that the scribe of Lambeth 491a could have originated from a family with connections to this same region of Essex as the later owners, especially given that the dialect of his literary texts have been located to Barking, Essex.³⁸ Furthermore, rather than placing the scribe in the context of the Guildhall, Warner more closely relates his scribe to the livery companies of London, which would directly relate the scribe of *Awntyrs* with the textual communities of Lambeth 491a.³⁹ Books, as Anne Sutton has stated, were 'piece-goods and logically part of a mercers' stock and mercers were among those who imported them'.⁴⁰ As such, books constituted 'luxury items' which could be bought, much like the sumptuous clothes detailed in Walter Patsall's will, to denote and enhance the social status of their purchaser. The texts such as the *Awntyrs* and the *Book of Hunting* are conventionally aristocratic in their content. The Patsalls, having acquired a vast amount of wealth through their success in trade, have then invested in properties in the country, allowing their inheritors to become members of the landed gentry, as is the case for Thomas Patsall, 'gentleman'. The owning of books such as Lambeth 491a is thus part of their participation in a shared mercantile and gentry literary culture. The evidence from Lambeth 491a presents then a more nuanced reading of a textual community which existed in fifteenth-and-sixteenth-century London, consisting of city scribes such as the clerk who copied the text, merchants such as Walter Patsall, and gentry, such as Walter's nephew Thomas Patsall, all engaging with the same texts, and in this case, with the same manuscript.

³⁸ Essex, LP: 630, *LALME*.

³⁹ Warner, *Chaucer's Scribes*, p. 107.

⁴⁰ Sutton, *The Mercery*, p. 169.

4.2 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324 is a fragment of a larger compilation that undisputedly forms a distinct booklet, written over eleven paper folios presented in two gatherings of eight and four (fig. 4.7).



Fig. 4.7: *My collation Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324*

Oxford Douce 324, similarly to the *Awntyrs* of Lambeth 491a, presents its text in a single column, with an average of thirty lines to a page, featuring a blue-ink initial and red-ink flourishing opening the texts. In Oxford Douce 324, however, the last line of each stanza appears to the right of the third-from-last line and the text is a larger and neater production, the ruled-writing space measuring 204mm x 135mm with relatively wide margins, compared to a writing space of 175mm x 85mm in Lambeth 491a, which has narrower (or more excessively trimmed) margins. The *Awntyrs* of Oxford Douce 324 appears to be part of a larger organised commercial activity in what I will now argue is a London-produced manuscript. The existence of the *Awntyrs* in this manuscript further confirms that a demand for this text existed within London and continued to exist from the moment of the text's arrival in the city c. 1426-35 to the moment of its production by the scribe of Oxford Douce 324 in c. 1460-80.

The text of Oxford Douce 324 provides the most complete version of the *Awntyrs* poem, having survived in near-perfect condition. As such, almost all the editions are based on this text.⁴¹ In spite of this, there has been significantly less critical engagement with the manuscript and scholarly discussions of its meaning within the larger codex to which it once belonged is likewise limited. Kathleen Scott has reconstructed the parts of a larger codex using the eighteenth-century signatures of Thomas Rawlinson, owner of the book, along with the contemporaneous quire signatures, palaeographical and paper stock evidence. Scott has thus far been able to identify ten fragments containing seventeen texts, observing that they are ‘closely alike in page design, in size, in type of decoration, and in watermarks’.⁴² These fragments are as follows:

London, British Library

MS Additional 34764:

1. ‘Albion Chronicle’; fols 1r-10v

MS Sloane 3488:

1. ‘Hawking’ Prince Edward’s Book of Hunting; *Manual* 10.XXV.452; fols 1r-4v

MS Sloane 3489:

1. Friar Randolf, *Treteese of Physik*, fols 1r-5v
2. *Aqua Vite*, fols 7r-10v
3. *Agnus Castus*; *Manual* 10.XXV.234; fols 13r-29v
4. ‘Brother I pray’, fols 30r-44v
5. Pestilence Treatise, fols 45r-52v

Oxford, Bodleian Library

MS Douce 324:

1. *The Awntyrs off Arthure*; *DIMEV* 2628; *Manual* 1.I.30; fols 1r-12v

MS Rawlinson D.82:

1. *The Siege of Thebes*; *Manual* 1.I.77; fols 1r-10v
2. *The Siege of Troy*; *Manual* 1.I.76; fols 11r-24v

⁴¹ For a discussion of the editions of the *Awntyrs*, see Ch. 2.2 ‘Edited Text’.

⁴² Kathleen L. Scott, ‘Newly Discovered Booklets from a Reconstructed Middle English Manuscript’, *English Manuscript Studies*, 14 (2008), pp. 112-29 (p. 113).

3. John Gower, 'The Court of Venus' *Confessio Amantis*: DIMEV 4229; *Manual* 7.XVII.7; fols 25r-33v

MS Rawlinson D.99:

1. *Mandeville's Travels*: *Manual* 7.XIX.5(d); fols 1r-62v

MS Rawlinson D.913:

1. *Manuale Curatorum*, fols 10r-21v

MS Rawlinson Poet 35:

1. Benedict Burgh, *Distichs of Cato*: DIMEV 1418; *Manual* 9.XXII.33, 39; fols 1r-17r
2. John Lydgate, *Dietary*: DIMEV 1356; *Manual* 6.XVI.34, 35; fols 17v-18v

MS Rawlinson Poet 143:

1. *Book of Hunting*: DIMEV 6507; fols 1r-20v

MS Rawlinson Poet 168:

1. Thomas Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*: DIMEV 2330; *Manual* 3.VIII.2; fols 1r-110v

These manuscripts include numerous features, which when considered together, suggest they were commercially produced: three scribes have been identified, scribe A, B, and C, with twelve of the seventeen texts, including the *Awntyrs*, written by scribe A. All the fragments are distinct booklets of regular gatherings, with uniformity of presentation and their own system of quire signatures; each new fragment beginning with the letter *a*. The quire signatures are also in the hand of scribe A, who appears to be the principal organiser of the book. The production of the texts in individual booklets and the consistent use of the same paper stock by each of the three scribes (featuring a watermark of a crown and crossed rod, not recorded in *Briquet*) suggest that the manuscript was produced collaboratively by a group of professional scribes. The use of booklets facilitated the simultaneous copying of texts by the individual scribes, possibly at different locations. The use of a new system of signatures in each booklet, written by scribe A, could indicate that the quires were prepared before being distributed for copying, using exemplar texts to

determine the space required.⁴³ Preparing the quires in this way would account for the number of blank yet framed and ruled pages that occur in all but three of the fragments. Scott, Keiser, Hands and Hanna have all argued that these gatherings would have formed a manuscript ‘clearly produced in order to create one coherent-appearing collection of texts [...] especially written and assembled for a single patron’, that patron being presumed to be the head of a provincial gentry household.⁴⁴

Two separate linguistic profiles have been carried out by *LALME* on two separate fragments: Rawlinson D.82 has been located to Northamptonshire and Oxford Douce 324 to Derbyshire.⁴⁵ However, scribe A is the hand identified in both booklets, with neither of the other scribes having been profiled. The different locations, rather than represent the dialect of the scribe, are more likely to represent the origin of the scribe’s exemplar texts, capable of copying texts with a range of linguistic variants from diverse dialectal regions. This identifies scribe A, according to Benskin and McIntosh, as a *literatim*-copyist; a scribe who reproduces the language of the text more or less unchanged, having copied it visually rather than emending it to their own dialect.⁴⁶ Benskin and McIntosh observe that this type of copyist is rare, but also concede that alliterative texts are less susceptible to scribal alterations, since, in order to preserve the alliterative fabric of the verse, a scribe must reproduce the authorial forms whenever they occur in the alliterative position.⁴⁷ The verse of the *Awntyrs* frequently adheres to the pattern *aa/aa* in the alliterative long line, making it one of the most densely alliterated texts to survive from the later medieval period, therefore rendering any attempt to determine the dialect of the text more

⁴³ Ibid., p. 120.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 120-21.

⁴⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D.82, *LALME* LP 6640; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324, *LALME* LP 320.

⁴⁶ Michael Benskin and Angus McIntosh, ‘General Introduction: 3.13. “Three Types of Copying”, *LALME* <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/intros/atlas_gen_intro.html> [accessed 1 September 2018].

⁴⁷ Ibid.

problematic. Editors of the poem have frequently commented that Oxford Douce 324 is the ‘best text’, not only in its completeness, but also for its maintaining of the verse form, Hanna further stating that ‘the errors of Douce represent homographic substitutions which suggest that scribes made some effort to preserve the form of readings which they did not precisely understand’.⁴⁸ This may support the argument that scribe A was a *literatim*-copyist, certainly made more likely by the commercial context of Oxford Douce 324. Further evidence supports the idea of scribe A as a *literatim*-copyist, as Gates observes ‘the scribe of Douce 324 on several occasions writes the word *brandene/brandure* where the other mss read *brauden/braudure* i.e. embroider(y)’.⁴⁹ scribe A’s mistaking of the letter forms of *u* for *n* in this case supports the assessment that the scribe was copying visually, rather than for comprehension. Further linguistic analysis of these fragments would be required to confidently classify the scribe’s dialect or to identify this collection of texts as ‘provincial’, especially as so many of the features of their production, as well as evidence for later use, support the argument that these texts were produced by professional scribes in a London context.⁵⁰

Although these booklets were clearly transmitted together, each of them bearing the eighteenth-century signature of antiquarian Thomas Rawlinson, it is not certain that they were ever bound together as one large volume, and certainly not in what order. As Alexandra Gillespie has observed, there are numerous references to texts as ‘units’, ‘books’, ‘sections’, and ‘fascicles’ in Early Modern sale and library catalogues.⁵¹ MS Sloane 3489 seems to have circulated separately from the other fragments as a collection of

⁴⁸ *Awntyrs*, ed. Hanna, p. 54.

⁴⁹ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, p. 59.

⁵⁰ A similar argument has been made by Simon Horobin in relation to the C text of *Piers Plowman*. Horobin establishes that five early manuscript witnesses to this version were produced by professional scribes in London who accurately transmitted the South-West Midlands dialect of a common exemplar. See: Simon Horobin, “‘In London and Opeland’: The Dialect and Circulation of the C Version of *Piers Plowman*”, *Medium Aevum*, 74.2 (2005), 248-69.

⁵¹ Gillespie, ‘Medieval Books’, p. 1.

medical texts; this manuscript reveals a greater textual engagement with the book by later owners with numerous marginal notes and additions, where the majority of the surviving manuscripts remain largely untouched with an abundance of blank space. The organisation of the booklets, their uniform layout and large number of blank pages, could indicate that these booklets made up part of a stationer's regular stock, as has been suggested by Andrew Taylor in his discussion of booklets and the beginning of speculative production.⁵² Taylor argues that 'by the fifteenth century there is evidence that the market for booklets was expanding', and includes the *Awntyrs* and Oxford Douce 324 as an example. Erik Kwakkel has discussed the role of the stationer and other book-artisans operating within London in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, building on work such as that of C. Paul Christianson's *A Directory of London Stationers and Book Artisans 1300-1500* to establish an argument for the increased commercialisation of the book trade in the later Middle Ages.⁵³ Oxford Douce 324 exemplifies this increased commercialisation and an assessment of these booklets further supports the claim that these texts were professionally produced in London.

A comparison with other similarly produced London manuscripts helps to confirm the London commercial provenance of Oxford Douce 324 and this collection of booklets. In their essay 'Selecting the Text: Rawlinson C. 86 and Some Other Books for London Readers' Julia Boffey and Carol Meale analyse Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C. 86, a late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth-century manuscript containing items by Chaucer and Lydgate, as well as the Arthurian romances *Sir Landeval* and *The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell*.⁵⁴ Rawlinson C. 86 is an assembly of a number of smaller

⁵² Taylor, 'Authors, Scribes, Patrons and Books', p. 359.

⁵³ Erik Kwakkel, 'Commercial Organization', pp. 75-77; C. Paul Christianson, *A Directory of London Stationers and Book Artisans 1300-1500* (New York: Bibliographical Society of America, 1990).

⁵⁴ *Sir Landeval*, DIMEV 5002, *Manual* 1.I.89; *The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell*: DIMEV 3130; *Manual* 1.I.34.

textual units, with paper stocks and decorative details that indicate these booklets originated in the same workshop, much like the Oxford Douce 324 and its related fragments. Significantly, Boffey and Meale have observed that four of the Rawlinson C. 86 booklets have an entirely separate system of quire signatures; each new booklet beginning again with an *a* signature.⁵⁵ This is also true of the Oxford Douce 324 booklets. Although they are now fragmented, evidence remains of a group of these texts having once formed a larger textual unit compiled of booklets, which may have appeared not dissimilar to Rawlinson C. 86 discussed by Boffey and Meale. There is a second set of medieval quire signatures in brown crayon, above those in red ink, in several the booklets (fig. 4.8) of the Oxford Douce 324 collection. These secondary signatures survive in Rawlinson D.82, Oxford Douce 324, and Rawlinson Poet 168: Rawlinson D.82, containing *The Siege of Thebes*, *The Siege of Troy*, and an excerpt of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, bearing the signatures *e*, *g* and *h* (though the first folio of *g* has been mislabelled *f*).⁵⁶

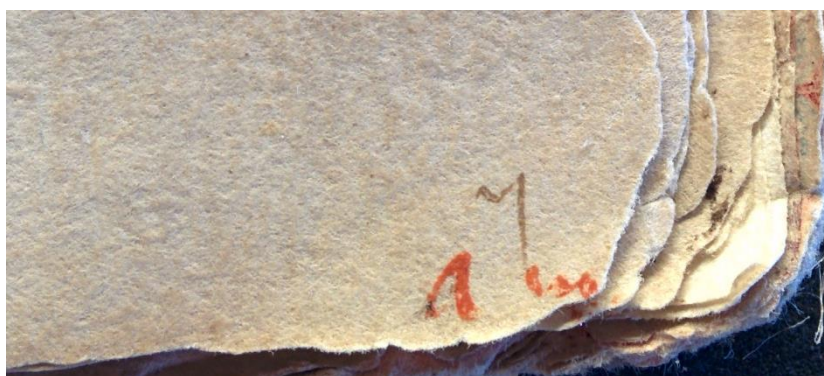


Fig. 4.8: Detail of folio 3r, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324, quire signatures

Oxford Douce 324 containing *Awntyrs* is labelled *j* and *k* (fig. 4.8); and the signatures *l*, *m*, *n*, *o*, *p*, *r*, and *s* can be found in the Thomas Hoccleve *Regiment of Princes* of Rawlinson Poet 168. What is significant about these signatures is that they appear to be grouping texts thematically. As in Lambeth 491a, *Awntyrs* is being placed alongside siege poems. *The*

⁵⁵ Boffey and Meale, 'Selecting the Text', pp. 153-56.

⁵⁶ 'Court of Venus' excerpt from John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* copied into the fourth gathering of this booklet has no surviving signatures.

Siege of Thebes and *The Siege of Troy* are prose redactions of Lydgate texts, and thus, as in the books copied by the Lambeth 491a scribe, *Awntyrs* is once again being copied with texts by London authors; Lydgate, Gower and Hoccleve all appear in this group.

This collection of booklets also features items that account for some of the most widely disseminated vernacular texts of the fifteenth century, such as those of Rawlinson Poet 35: the Middle English translation of Benedict Burgh's *Distichs of Cato* surviving in twenty-five manuscript versions and John Lydgate's *Dietary* surviving in fifty-six. Many of the initials and some of the rubrication has been left unfinished, featuring guide letters and instruction for lines that are to be completed in red or blue ink, as evidenced in Rawlinson Poet 35, Rawlinson D.99 and Rawlinson Poet 143 (fig. 4.9).

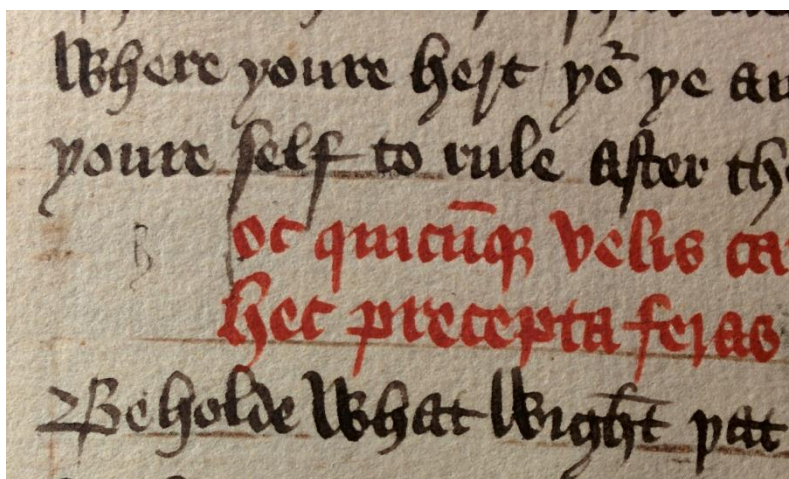


Fig. 4.9: Detail of unfinished initial, Oxford, Bodleian, MS Rawlinson Poet 35, fol 5r.

Leaving the rubrication unfinished in this way could potentially suggest that the booklets were being produced on a speculative basis; the use of multiple scribes to complete the texts and the lack of finished initials representing a need for the texts to be produced quickly and economically.

Boffey and Meale in their discussion of Rawlinson C. 86 suggest that the speculative production of Booklet II is 'one context' in which to view the manuscript, and I would argue that the same can be argued for the manuscript fragments that once belonged

to Thomas Rawlinson, including Oxford Douce 324.⁵⁷ It seems likely that, given the professional, organised circumstances of the booklets' production, including the *literatim* copying of the *Awntyrs* text by scribe A, that an enterprising stationer or scribe may have commissioned these works, which includes such popular texts as those by Langland, Gower and Lydgate, all of which had a large dissemination within the capital, including among mercantile readers. The texts of this collection also share numerous textual affinities with the books copied by the scribe of Lambeth 491a, known to be copied in London, including a copy of *Mandeville's Travels*, *The Book of Hunting*, and the 'Chronicle of Albion' which shares material with the Middle English prose *Brut*. The texts produced in both manuscripts shows the diversity of material available to London compilers as well as to the range of interests of London audiences. The production circumstances of both Oxford Douce 324 and Lambeth 491a discussed here, therefore contribute to Boffey and Meale's outlining of a London textual community actively consuming Arthurian literature. The *Awntyrs* thus joins Arthurian texts such as *Sir Landeval* and *The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell* of Rawlinson C. 86 and *Libeaus Desconus* of Lambeth 306 as commercially produced texts, popular amongst London audiences.⁵⁸ The survival of *Awntyrs* in two London books of the fifteenth century, produced approximately fifty years apart, each copied from different versions, reveals the enduring interest in this text by London readers, and the very existence of commercially produced texts suggests that there was a continued demand for this poem that is not reflected by the scarcity of its surviving copies.

A biobibliographical investigation into Oxford Douce 324 and its related fragments both confirms its London provenance and the circulation of the texts amongst a London

⁵⁷ Boffey and Meale, 'Selecting the Text', pp. 152.

⁵⁸ *Libeaus Desconus*, DIMEV 2824; *Manual* 1.I.38; London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 306 also contains a copy of *The Trental of St Gregory*: DIMEV 2777; *Manual* 9.XXIV.209, a key textual source for *Awntyrs*, see Ch. 2.1 'Surviving Texts'.

mercantile audience. There are three identifiable names inscribed into three of the separate booklets belonging to this collection. Kate Harris has identified the name 'John Keme' in the lower margin of folio 14r of Rawlinson D. 82, the inscription only decipherable with the aid of an ultraviolet lamp.⁵⁹ The name 'Thomas Barnarde' appears clearly in the upper margin of folio 26r of Rawlinson D.99 (fig. 4.10) and, written in the same hand, is the name 'Thomas Jhonson' in the upper margin of folio 6v of Oxford Douce 324 (fig. 4.11). All these individuals are associated either with the Mercers' or with the Drapers' of London and can therefore be considered to be participating in cognate social and textual networks as the owners of Lambeth 491a.

The name of John Keme, as discovered by Kate Harris, occurs in Rawlinson D. 82, comprising of two prose redactions of John Lydgate's poems *The Siege of Thebes* and *The Siege of Troy* as well as an extract of the 'Court of Venus' from John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. All of these items are London texts; both Lydgate and Gower are in the category of London authors, having lived and written in the city. Lydgate was further associated with the Mercers' of London through the 'Mummings' performed before William Esfield, mercer and mayor of London in 1429.⁶⁰ Furthermore, there are large numbers of extant manuscripts containing these authors' works known to have circulated in the capital.⁶¹ John Keme, whose name appears in this booklet, is also connected to the Mercers' Company. He was apprenticed to mercer Robert Grene in 1490 and is named as one of the four wardens of the Mercers' in 1499 along with John Carvel, John Barnard, and John

⁵⁹ Kate Harris, 'John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: The Virtues of Bad Texts', *Manuscripts and Readers*, ed. Derek Pearsall, pp. 27-40 (p. 30).

⁶⁰ Carol M. Meale, 'The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye and Mercantile Literary Culture in Late-Medieval London', *London and Europe in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Julia Boffey and Pamela King (London: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1995), pp. 181-227 (p. 195).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Aleyn.⁶² This directly connects John Keme and the Rawlinson D. 82 fragment with John Aleyn, and thus indirectly with the Patsalls, likely owners of Lambeth 491a. This document also potentially connects two of the Rawlinson fragments: John Barnard, named as one of the other four wardens of the Mercers' in 1499, could be a relative of the Thomas Barnard whose name occurs in Rawlinson D. 99.

Thomas Barnard's name appears in Rawlinson D.99, written twice into the top margin of folio 26r of *Mandeville's Travels*, the only text of this fragment.

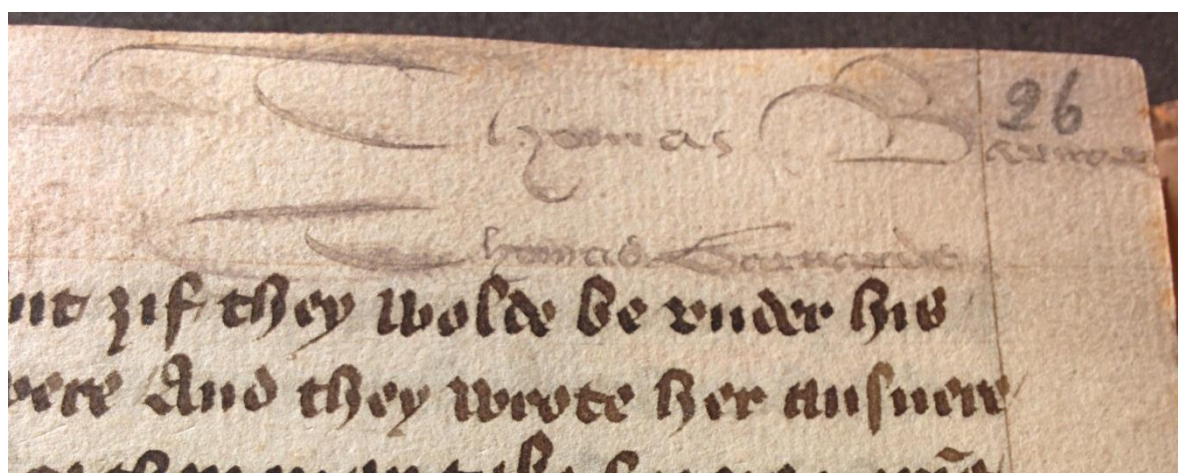


Fig. 4.10: Detail of the name 'Thomas Barnarde' in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Rawlinson D.99, fol. 26r

A Thomas Barnard is also connected to a John Aleyn through a document pre-dating the booklet's composition, dated 1443-50, which refers to a bond for the safekeeping of a priest.⁶³ This cannot be the same John Aleyn (c. 1470–1544) already identified, but an older party of the same name and likely of the same family. Thomas Barnard also appears to own lands in Essex, listed as a witness to a document sealed at Great Waltham, Thomas Barnard is recorded as 'of Barnston, Essex'.⁶⁴ This is located just over 8 miles from Thaxted, the birthplace of John Aleyn, the younger, and family home of the Patsalls. It is

⁶² 'Robt. Grene' (1490), ROLLCO
<http://londonroll.org/event/?company=mrc&event_id=MCEB1794> [accessed 21 January 2017];
London, TNA, C/1/316/29.

⁶³ London, TNA C 1/15/274.

⁶⁴ London, TNA DL 25/1245/985.

also clear from a document dated 1445 that Thomas Barnard was a merchant of some wealth: he is listed as a ‘citizen and merchant of London’ and as creditor of £300 to James Berkeley, lord of Berkeley and knight of Gloucester.⁶⁵ This large an amount of money would suggest that Thomas Barnard was among the wealthiest merchants of the city. This document also connects Thomas Barnard with the mayor William Estfield, before whom the debt is taken. A version of *Mandeville’s Travels* also occurs in one of the three literary manuscripts written by the HM 114/Lambeth 491a scribe at the beginning of the fifteenth century. HM 114 and Rawlinson D.82 are therefore related through their shared instance of this text.

The third fragment found inscribed with a name is Oxford Douce 324, witness to the latest surviving version of *Awntyrs*. The name ‘Thomas Jhonson’ appears in folio 6v (fig. 4.11) written in the same location of the page and in the same hand as the name of Thomas Barnard (fig. 4.10).

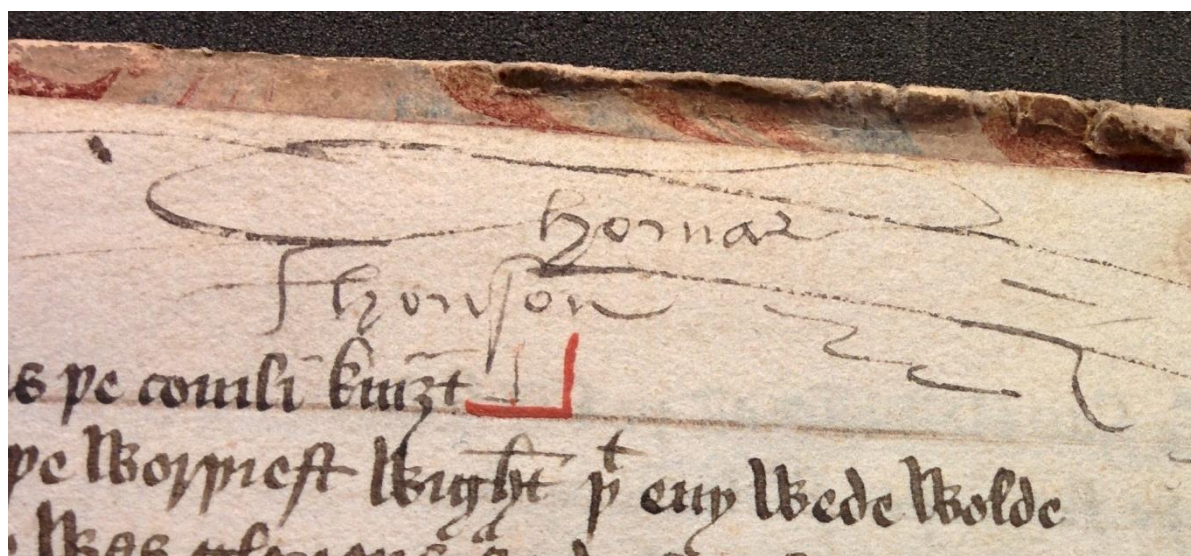


Fig. 4.11: Detail of name ‘Thomas Jhonson(e)’ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324, fol. 6v top margin

This also appears to be the same hand who has copied out line 414 of the poem, writing ‘yf thou be courteou[s] Knyght’ in the margin of folio 7r (fig. 4.12). This rare engagement

⁶⁵ London, TNA C 241/232/14.

with the text is of quite a different nature to the marginal writing of Thomas Patsall; it is not a messy practice of handwriting, but rather one of only two signs of any engagement with the *Awntyrs* text, the remainder of the booklet remains empty.

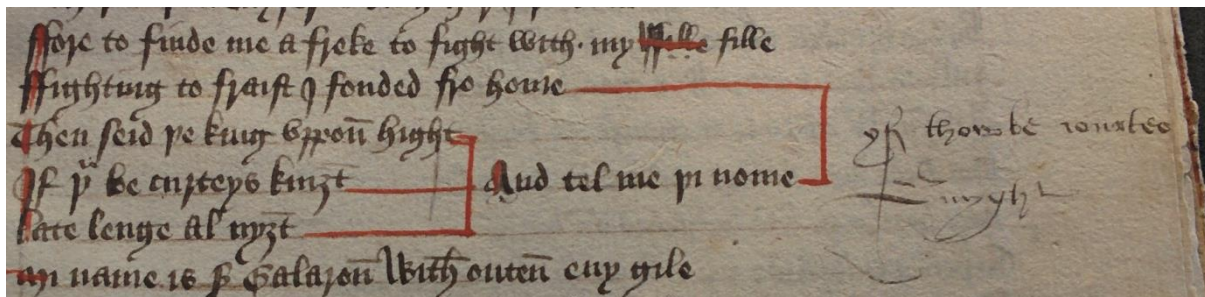


Fig. 4.12: Detail of marginal annotation, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324, fol. 7r right margin

The lack of any other signs of ownership, the numerous blank pages remaining unfilled, and the uniformity even of the two names themselves leads me to suspect that these two inscriptions do not denote ownership by those named. I cannot speak for that of John Keme, which Kate Harris has observed with the use of an ultraviolet lamp. If the booklets were used in the manner suggested by the circumstances of their production, having been commercially produced, perhaps to form a stationer's stock, then these names may instead perhaps signify potential customers for whom copies were made, the inscriptions perhaps being written by a stationer. Regardless of the reason why they were written, the existence of the names in the margins of these manuscripts suggests these men were at least part of the same social community, with some shared connection to these texts.

A somewhat tenuous connection can be established between Thomas Johnson whose name is copied into Oxford Douce 324 and Thomas Barnard whose name appears in Rawlinson D.99. In 1495 a Thomas Johnson is taken as an apprentice to the draper Thomas Howe.⁶⁶ It is in the same entry into the Roll of London Livery Companies that the new apprentice Thomas Johnson is recorded as Thomas Johnson 'alias Gray'. In land

⁶⁶ 'Thomas Johnson' (1495), ROLLCO, <http://londonroll.org/event/?company=drp&event_id=DREW9607> [accessed 21 January 2017].

transactions relating to a messuage of land in Thaxted (*Thaksted*) Essex, a John *Gray* is mentioned along with an Agnes Barnard of Essex, widow.⁶⁷ The Barnards have already been established as owning property in Barnston, Essex, just over 8 miles from the village of Thaxted, also the home of the Patsalls, likely owners of the Lambeth 491a version of *Awntyrs*. This connection, though more tenuous than others presented here, potentially reveals a late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century audience for *Awntyrs* amongst London merchants who formed a textual community of landowners in Essex. If this document places members of the Johnson family (alias *Gray*) in Thaxted then each of the names (with the exception of John Keme) inscribed into the Oxford Douce 324 and Rawlinson D. 82 booklets have a connection to this village of Essex. Furthermore, all of the individuals whose names feature in the margins of Oxford Douce 324 and the booklets discussed above, as well as the Patsalls who likely owned Lambeth 491a, belonged to the two most prominent merchant companies of London in the fifteenth century; the Drapers' and the Mercers', and all can be seen to be participating in the same social networks, which included such influential and wealthy merchants as Sirs William Estfield, Henry Colet, and John Aleyn.

Through Thomas Johnson, the *Awntyrs* can again be affiliated with both the city of London as well as with the county of Essex. Two documents refer to a tenement with surrounding lands bought by a Thomas Johnson, citizen and draper of London, in 'Berkyng in the counte of Essex'. Given the dating of the documents, this is likely to be an elder relative of the same Thomas Johnson whose name is found the margins of Oxford Douce 324.⁶⁸ This reinforces the argument that a mercantile textual community for *Awntyrs*

⁶⁷ London, TNA C 1/54/133; London, TNA C 1/54/167.

⁶⁸ London, TNA C 1/22/13. The dating of this document is uncertain, being either 1452-54 or 1493-1500. Given that the second document [C 1/82/91] is dated to 1485 and refers to Thomas Johnson's daughter, I would argue for the earlier dating of 1452-54, which predates the composition of the manuscript in c. 1460-80. Thus, it seems likely that the Thomas Johnson named in the manuscript is a younger member of the same family; London, TNA C 1/82/91.

existed within this region of Essex and that the Thomas Patsall who writes his name into the pages of Lambeth 491a was, like Thomas Johnson whose name appears in Oxford Douce 324, living in Essex. The reconsideration of Oxford Douce 324 as a London manuscript and a biobibliographic study of both Oxford Douce 324 and Lambeth 491a therefore reveals that the *Awntyrs* came to exist within the same textual communities and, most significantly, within the same subculture. The poem is found within the same social network consisting of a relatively small London mercantile elite, working in the city and living in Essex. By placing these two extant versions of *Awntyrs* in the same textual community the circulation of the text appears at first more geographically limited. This is perhaps to misinterpret the evidence. It does not limit the potential transmission of the text as much as suggest the opposite: that there were multiple copies of *Awntyrs* being imported into and circulating within the capital during the fifteenth century. It is significant that the scribes of Lambeth 491a and Oxford Douce 324 relied upon different exemplars for their copies of *Awntyrs*. That the later text of Oxford Douce 324 did not rely on the earlier Lambeth 491a version is remarkable. It demonstrates that multiple copies were in circulation and that the audiences of this text had access to these multiple copies.

When first comparing Lambeth 491a and Oxford Douce 324 it is evident that they are very different material objects. One is a book of 290 folios, where the other is a fragment of just 12 folios. The former is produced by a single, prolific copyist, the other being part of an organised collaboration by multiple scribes. Lambeth 491a is considered by editors to be the worst text of the *Awntyrs*, whereas Oxford Douce 324 is considered the best (even though the scribe of the earlier text takes care to correct and emend his version where the later scribe makes errors). Each version represents a very different dialectal region, Lambeth 491a being located to Essex and Oxford Douce 324 to Derbyshire. The books also seem to demonstrate varying commercial practices, from the more individual entrepreneurial efforts of the Lambeth 491a scribe to the highly organised collaborative

enterprise of Oxford Douce 324. Though produced fifty years apart, these two copies of *Awntyrs* belong to larger collections which share literary material and share audiences. A comparison of these two books establishes a new London context for the *Awntyrs*, identifying it as a text in high demand, copied alongside some of the century's "bestsellers". At the same time, this comparison serves to highlight the permeability of the categories often used to define these manuscripts. The textual community outlined here reveals that, though these texts were produced by London scribes, the men whose names appear in the margins occupied multiple spaces as members of city livery companies and as members of the "provincial" gentry in Essex.

An examination of the *Awntyrs* in Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91 and Princeton, University Library, MS Taylor 9 (*olim.* Ireland-Blackburn MS) serves to further disrupt the previously accepted narrative that the principal reception context for the *Awntyrs* was the household of the provincial gentry. This narrative has been predicated on the prominence of Lincoln 91 in scholarship and the identification of this manuscript with Robert Thornton and his household. The gentry household has long been considered the home of late-medieval romance; the principal audience for this literature understood to be the provincial, landowning members of society. Felicity Riddy states that the Middle English romance belonged to a 'literate but unlearned lay culture' that centered on the home, defined by Riddy as 'a group of people living together in the "nuclear family household."' ⁶⁹ Similarly, Michael Johnston has argued that 'we should envision the gentry household as the site of romance consumption, and even production, in this period.' ⁷⁰ The late-medieval household as the principle consumers of romance is arguably evidenced by the way the majority of these texts survive: in large, multi-text compilations, featuring

⁶⁹ Felicity Riddy, 'Middle English Romance: Family, Marriage, Intimacy', *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. by Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 235-52 (p. 235).

⁷⁰ Michael Johnston, 'Romance, Distrainment, and the Gentry', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 112.4 (2013), 433-60 (p. 436).

diverse contents that are thought to represent the interests and needs of a “typical” late-medieval gentry family. These contents range from historical tracts, educational treatises and herbal remedies, to devotional literature, songs, prayers and includes the entertaining stories that make up the corpus of Middle English romance. Only a small number of these manuscripts survive and most of them can indeed be associated with provincial aristocratic households. Most commonly included in this corpus are: CUL, MS Ff.2.38; Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 175; Edinburgh, NLS, MS Advocates 19.2.1 (the Auchinleck MS); Edinburgh, NLS, MS Advocates 19.3.1 (the Heege MS); Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91 and London, BL, MS Additional 31042 (the Thornton MSS); London, BL, MS Cotton Caligula a.2; London, BL, MS Egerton 2862; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61.⁷¹ The two Thornton manuscripts are both included in this corpus. However, the material details of the *Awntyrs* as it survives in both Lincoln 91 and Princeton Taylor 9, along with epistolary evidence which reveals the independent circulation of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, suggests that Arthurian romances were not only produced as booklets, but also consumed, at least in their earliest phase of consumption, in this form, both inside and outside of the domestic context.⁷² This chapter then, will reassess the interpretation of these romances as belonging to the late-medieval gentry household. Such a thing as a “typical” household is inherently problematic, as the late-medieval landed classes could range from those earning £5 pa to £100 pa. Furthermore, households were mobile, not always provincial, and members of the gentry could simultaneously be involved in civic government, commercial enterprise, and local

⁷¹ For further discussion of this corpus, see: *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, eds Putter and Gilbert; Pearsall, ‘The Whole Book’; Phillipa Hardman, ‘Domestic Learning and Teaching: Investigating Evidence for the Role of “Household Miscellanies” in Late Medieval England’, *Women and Writing, c. 1340-c. 1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, ed. by Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillipa Hardman (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2010), pp. 15-33; Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*.

⁷² Patrick J. Murphy and Fred Porcheddu, ‘Robert Thornton, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, and Cambridge University Library MS Dd.11.45’, *Modern Philology*, 114.1 (2016), 130-47.

religious communities, as a study into the activities of the owners of the *Awntyrs* demonstrates.

4.3 Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91

Robert Thornton, a scribe, tax collector and member of the gentry from the North Riding of Yorkshire, has been the focus of numerous in-depth studies due to the two large compilations to survive in his hand: Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91 and London, BL, MS Additional 31042. Containing over 130 texts in as many as 500 folios, the books have been classified as household manuscripts because they contain texts diverse in genre, form and function, thought to reflect the needs and tastes of a late-medieval gentry family. Produced *c.* 1430-50, these two manuscripts, copied entirely on paper, feature several signatures, colophons and titles scribed by Robert Thornton and added to by later generations of the family.⁷³ There are many well-established discussions of Robert Thornton and his compilation practices.⁷⁴ The most recent contribution to the field has been *Robert Thornton and His Books* (2014) edited by Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston. This book provides collations of the two manuscripts and a detailed list of the items in each codex, with references to other extant versions and modern editions of these works. Also included is an index of the manuscripts which share items with the Thornton books, allowing for further exploration of textual relationships. Fein and Johnston are successful in bringing together much of the existing scholarship into one comprehensive volume. The essays that follow the editors' two introductory chapters, however, fall

⁷³ *Robert Thornton and His Books*, eds Fein and Johnston, pp. 19-20.

⁷⁴ For example: D. S. Brewer and A. E. B. Owen, *The Thornton Manuscript (Lincoln Cathedral MS. 91)* (Scolar Press: London, 1978); Sarah M. Horrall, 'The Watermarks of the Thornton Manuscripts', *Notes and Queries*, 27.5 (1980), 385-86; Ralph Hanna, 'The London Thornton Manuscript: A Corrected Collation', *Studies in Bibliography*, 37 (1984), 122-30; Ralph Hanna, 'The Growth of Robert Thornton's Books', *Studies in Bibliography*, 40 (1987), 51-61; Thompson, *London Thornton Manuscript*; John Ivor Carlson, 'Scribal Intentions in Medieval Romance: A Case Study of Robert Thornton', *Studies in Bibliography*, 58 (2007), 49-71; Susanna Fein, 'The Contents of Robert Thornton's Manuscripts', *Robert Thornton and His Books*, eds Fein and Johnston, p. 12-66.

somewhat short of representing the wide scope and diversity of these books, with much of the focus being on the romances copied by Thornton.

Contained in Thornton's two compilations are fifteen romances, six of which are unique. Most of the romance texts can be found in Booklet II of Lincoln 91 (fols 53r-178v), including three Arthurian texts: the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, and *Sir Perceval of Gales*. In this chapter, I will therefore be focussing specifically on Booklet II of Lincoln 91.⁷⁵

Booklet II (folios 53-179)⁷⁶

1. Alliterative *Morte Arthure*: DIMEV 3745, *Manual* 1.I.16; fols 53r-98v
2. *Octavian*: DIMEV 3132, *Manual* 1.I.81; fols 98r-109r
3. *Sir Isumbras*: DIMEV 1934, *Manual* 1.I.78; fols 109r-14v
4. *The Earl of Toulouse*: DIMEV 2813, *Manual* 1.I.94; fols 114v-22r
5. *Life of Saint Christopher*: DIMEV 3246, *Manual* 2.V.59(c); fols 112v-29v
6. *Sir Degrevant*: DIMEV 3197, *Manual* 1.I.97; fols 130r-39v
7. *Sir Eglamour of Artois*: DIMEV 2867, *Manual* 1.I.79; fols 139v-47r
8. *The Wicked Knight and the Friar*: DIMEV 2864, *Manual* 9.XXIV.186; fols 147r-48r
9. *Liarde*: DIMEV 3304; fols 148r-49r
10. *Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy*: DIMEV 620, *Manual* 5.XIII.290; fols 149v-53v
11. *The Awntyrs off Arthure*: DIMEV 2628, *Manual* 1.I.30; fols 154r-61r
12. *Sir Perceval of Gales*: DIMEV 3074, *Manual* 1.I.39; fols 161r-76r
13. Various charms and prayers in Latin and English (items 22-36); fols 176r-78v

⁷⁵ See Appendix C for a full description and collation of Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91.

⁷⁶ In the item numbering, I am choosing to represent only each text within Booklet II, not accounting for the inscriptions by Thornton as individual items, but regarding them instead as extra-textual. This numbering is to deliberately show the booklet as it would have appeared as a separate unit of texts. The items here represent Items 8-36 in the 'list of contents' given in *Robert Thornton and His Books*, eds Fein and Johnston, pp. 20-60.

The *Awntyrs* is the only one of the three Arthurian texts copied by Thornton to survive in any other manuscript, and as such has not received enough attention from scholars, particularly for what it might reveal about the function of Arthurian romance for its audiences. The alliterative *Morte Arthure*, as the first text of Booklet II, has however, received much scholarly attention.⁷⁷ The most recent contribution to these studies has been the reinterpretation of a letter found in CUL, MS Dd.11.45, which instructs William Cuke, the Priest of Bilsby, to bring ‘ane Inglische buke es cald Mort Arthur, as may se wrytten of my jand’ to the house of John Salus, burgess of Bishops Lynn, Norfolk, along with a volvelle which also belongs to the letter’s author.⁷⁸ Patrick J. Murphy and Fred Porcheddu have argued that this letter is a copy of one sent by Robert Thornton in reference to his text of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, now bound into Booklet II of Lincoln 91.⁷⁹ The letter, they argue, makes specific mention of an inscription written at the poem’s conclusion, which they interpret to mean the inscription found on folio 98v of Lincoln 91: ‘R Thornton dictus q[ui] scripsit sit b[e]n[e]dict[us] ame[n]’ (may the said R. Thornton who wrote this be blessed, amen).⁸⁰ It is through this reference that Murphy and Porcheddu have associated the ‘Mort Arthur’ of the letter with Thornton’s copy, suggesting that after Thornton had copied this text, it circulated independently as a booklet prior to its binding into the larger volume of Lincoln 91, circulating separately from its owner. There is not enough evidence to establish that the letter and the alliterative *Morte* extant in Lincoln 91 refers to the same copy, written by the hand of Robert Thornton. The letter in CUL, MS Dd.11.45 is a copy of an original, and so cannot be identified by script, it does not make specific reference to Thornton nor quote the inscription, but rather refers just to the text being written ‘of my jand’, a relatively common inscription found in late-medieval texts.

⁷⁷ See: ‘Selected Bibliography: The Alliterative “Morte Arthure”’, pp. 117–21.

⁷⁸ CUL, MS Dd.11.45, folio 142^r.

⁷⁹ Murphy and Porcheddu, p. 134.

⁸⁰ This is one of three inscriptions, arguably in three different hands. For a further discussion, see Murphy and Porcheddu, pp. 142–44.

The evidence presented by this letter remains significant, however. It demonstrates that the alliterative *Morte* might well have been circulating in booklet form. If not identified as the copy now bound in Lincoln 91, the letter serves to suggest that other copies of the text could have been produced and used in this way, particularly as an examination of the material details of the alliterative *Morte* in Lincoln 91 supports the likely use of Thornton's text in Booklet II as a fascicle that was once independent from the larger manuscript.

The alliterative *Morte* exists in Lincoln 91 as three quires totalling fifty folios (D¹⁶ E¹⁸ F¹⁶), of which the *Morte* takes up forty-six (fols 53r-98v), presented in a single column of text, with three, four and five-line initials carried out in red ink with frequent illustrations of grotesque faces and figures leering at the reader. The opening folio is heavily discoloured and the margins damaged, enough to suggest that these gatherings remained unbound for some time. The final four folios of this booklet contain the opening lines of *Sir Octavian* (fols 98v-109r), written in double columns, thus presenting a visually striking change in format from the previous text. George R. Keiser has argued that *Sir Octavian* was copied some while after Thornton's copying of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, evident from a distinct change in the scribal hand: the text of *Sir Octavian*, Keiser observes, features a 2-shaped lower-case 'r' in the position immediately following 'o', written rapidly in a single stroke; this contrasts to Thornton's use of a long 'r' throughout the alliterative *Morte*. Keiser argues that, whereas the long 'r' is found in the earliest texts copied by Thornton, the 2-shaped 'r' was used most consistently in later texts, such as *Sir Octavian*. This palaeographic evidence is corroborated by the dates of the paper stocks used.⁸¹ The fifty folios of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* is made up of two paper stocks: the opening quires on stock B (a bull's head, comparable to *Briquet* 15203/6, dating to 1437-45; nearest to 15204, dated to 1440) and finished using stock L (a fleur de lys and fish,

⁸¹ George R. Keiser, 'Robert Thornton: Gentleman, Reader and Scribe', *Robert Thornton and His Books*, eds Fein and Johnston, pp. 67-108 (p. 79).

comparable to *Briquet* 5892/5, dated to 1418-47, nearest to 5895, dated to 1431-47).⁸² Stock L is then also used to copy the entirety of *The Privy of The Passion* (IPMEP 837; *Manual* 9.XXIII.62), which opens Booklet III of Lincoln 91. This is particularly significant as Angus McIntosh has argued that, based on dialectal evidence, both the alliterative *Morte Arthure* and *The Privy of The Passion* were copied from the same exemplar from southwest Lincolnshire.⁸³ It is clear from the use of paper stocks that they were indeed acquired at a similar time, but copied each into their own independent booklets.⁸⁴ This evidence supports the arguments made by Ralph Hanna and others that Thornton intentionally copied texts from the same exemplar into separate booklets, Hanna stating that ‘Thornton worked contemporaneously on four or five emerging fascicular manuscripts’ and was ‘remarkably flexible in his methods.’⁸⁵ Given that Thornton copied texts into separate booklets, and likely shared them in this form, it is also entirely plausible that he acquired texts as booklets: multiple items copied by a single scribe, but circulating as individual texts.

The production of Middle English Arthurian romance in booklets has already been established as a common practice by the mid-fifteenth century, this includes the copying of the *Awntyrs* poem by an experienced metropolitan scribe in Lambeth 491a, as discussed above. The evidence presented by the alliterative *Morte Arthure* shows Robert Thornton engaged in similar production methods, likely to allow for the speedier copying of items and swift returning of texts to their owners. The letter of CUL, MS Dd.11.45 does not

⁸² Horrall, ‘Watermarks’, p. 385; Thompson, *London Thornton Manuscript*, especially ‘Appendix: The Watermarks in Thornton’s Collection’.

⁸³ Hanna, ‘The Growth’, pp. 55-56.

⁸⁴ I am following Ralph Hanna in assuming that Thornton received his materials from the paper merchants in lots comprised of a single stock and that he used these stocks straight through until they were exhausted, only mixing stocks when his supply was running out. Hanna, ‘The Growth’, 60.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-61, p. 60. See also: Horrall, ‘Watermarks’, pp. 385-86; Angus McIntosh, ‘The Textual Transmission of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*’, *English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed. by Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962), pp. 231-40.

provide, as Murphy and Porcheddu argue it does, conclusive evidence that the copy of the alliterative *Morte* it refers to is the same copy that survives in Lincoln 91, nor that it was indeed a copy produced by Thornton. What it does provide however, is additional evidence, beyond the codicological evidence provided by the one surviving version of this text, that the poem circulated as a booklet. Indeed, the author of the letter requests the return of their copy of the alliterative *Morte*. Contemporary evidence from inventories further supports the argument that individual romance texts were likely being copied and used in booklet form. The Pastons' Inventory of Books (c. 1479) lists several romance items, including 'A boke had off myn ostesse at þe George [Inn] off þe Dethe off Arthur..., Kyng Richard Cure delyon [and] a croni[cle] to Edwarde þe iij,'.⁸⁶ The chronicle is likely a copy of the Middle English Prose *Brut* to 1377 (*IPMEP* 374; *Manual* 8.XXI.10) and the Death of Arthur likely a romance text not dissimilar to the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. One further Arthurian text appears in this inventory, 'the Greene Knyght', one of several vernacular texts in a larger compilation. The inventory here lists books and the multiple texts contained within them, suggesting that when the inventory itemizes a book referring only to a single text, it is precisely this, a book containing only one text. The author of this inventory also clearly makes a distinction between the books that are bound and the books 'in qwayerys', making sure to describe the colour and specific details of a binding, and further suggesting that several texts existed as unbound booklets, circulating 'in qwayerys'.⁸⁷ The unbound quires of text are however, still referred to as "books". This shows a flexible use of the term, employed to describe any unit of text, regardless of its physical form. Margaret Connolly has stated that 'there is some evidence to suggest that the provision of single-text books might have been more usual in the later Middle Ages than has hitherto been supposed', arguing that the cost-effectiveness of these booklets

⁸⁶ 'The Inventory of Englysshe Boks off John [Paston]' (c.1470s), *Paston Letters*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 6, item 987.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

would have also been important in non-commercial manuscript culture.⁸⁸ I would further argue that the ability for these booklets to circulate separately increases their functionality, making them even more appealing to audiences and suggesting that they were actively read both within and without the context of the household manuscript.

It is not only the alliterative *Morte Arthure* that Thornton produced as a book ‘in qwayerys’. The *Awntyrs* was also originally copied and used as an independent booklet. Although now situated in the middle of quire I, John J. Thompson, Ralph Hanna and others have argued that the *Awntyrs* (fols 154r-61r) once began its own gathering, their arguments discussed in more detail below. It would make sense that the impressive opening of the *Awntyrs* on folio 154r (fig. 4.13) was also once the opening folio of quire I (fols 144-63; originally 22 folios, wants folios 5 and 8): all other surviving copies of the text similarly begin on the recto of a new quire and the decoration and layout of *Awntyrs*, much like the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, presents it as more visually significant than the other romances of Booklet II. The poem is presented in single columns to allow for its long alliterative lines and features the largest decorated initial to survive from both codices, with an opening thirteen-line initial “I”, decorated delicately with a floral pattern in green ink (fig. 4.13):

⁸⁸ Margaret Connolly, ‘Compiling the Book’, *Production of Books*, eds Gillespie and Wakelin, pp. 129-49 (p. 148).

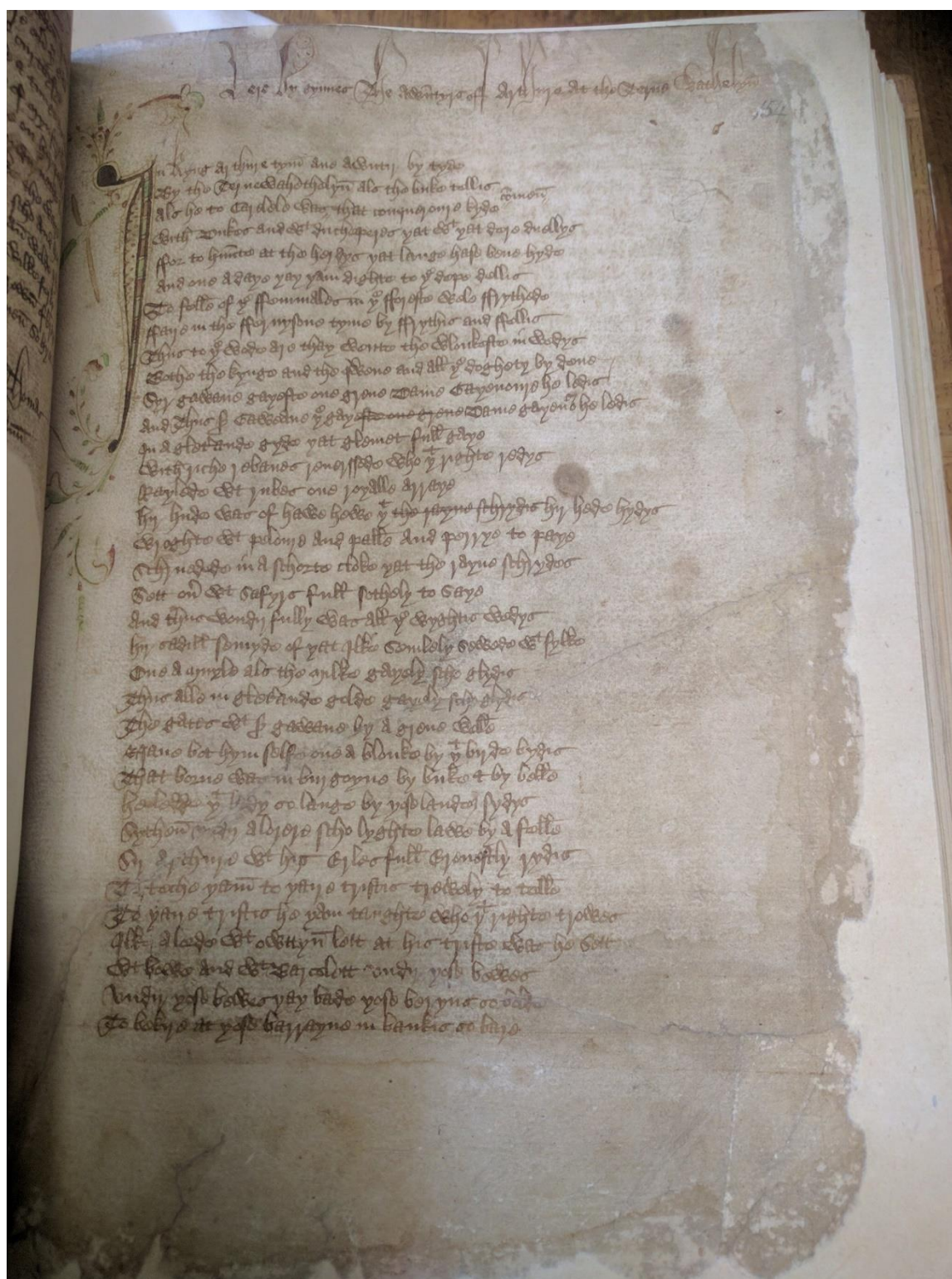


Fig. 4.13: Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91, folio 154r

The opening folio of the text also features a title across the top margin – the only surviving copy of the *Awntyrs to be titled*. This is written much in the same style as the title of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. The text which follows is severely damaged, with horizontal tears across folios 154-58 that have subsequently been repaired using a needle and thread,

the hole marks from the needle still visible despite the manuscript's mounting onto modern paper during later conservation. This damage and repair appear to have occurred during the fifteenth century and, although this was a common medieval practice with vellum leaves, Owen claims it is surprising to find in a paper manuscript.⁸⁹ Folio 159 is missing its lower half, with a *lacuna* of one folio directly following, meaning the Lincoln 91 text of *Awntyrs* is lacking approximately 106 lines. According to John J. Thompson, when Owen examined the unbound manuscript the overall damage to the codex was mostly confined to the outer leaves of gatherings, thus the extent of the damage to the *Awntyrs* text – situated in the very centre of its quire – is remarkable.⁹⁰ This however, can be explained by the fact that the *Awntyrs* once began quire I, meaning that the damage to the opening folios of the *Awntyrs* likely occurred when these *were* the opening folios of the gathering. Folio 153, the folio which now precedes the opening of the *Awntyrs*, but prior to the reorganization of the quire would have served as the final folio of the gathering, is also heavily damaged, lacking over two-thirds of the page. Despite this, the explicit for *Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy* is still entirely legible, as if this were written after the damage had occurred.

As it is now compiled, the *Awntyrs* begins not at the opening of the quire, but rather on the recto of the central bifolium. Thompson has convincingly argued that this reconfiguration resulted from Thornton's refolding of the gathering to effectively reverse the quire's order, an action which resulted in the blank folios following the *Awntyrs* text becoming the opening folios of quire I.⁹¹ This, Thompson argues, provided the space Thornton needed to finish his copying of *Sir Eglamour*, begun in the previous quire H. Other texts were then copied into the space between the end of *Sir Eglamour* on folio 147r and the beginning of the earlier-copied *Awntyrs* on folio 154r. Hanna supports Thompson's

⁸⁹ Brewer and Owen, *Thornton Manuscript*, p. xv.

⁹⁰ John J. Thompson, 'The Compiler in Action: Robert Thornton and the "Thornton Romances" in Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 91', *Manuscripts and Readers*, ed. Pearsall, pp. 113-24 (p. 123).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

argument using paper stock evidence: quire I was produced on one of Thornton's earliest used paper stocks, the gathering made up entirely of stock B (a bull's head, comparable to *Briquet* 15203/6, dating to 1437-45; nearest to 15204, dated to 1440), the same stock used for the opening quires of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, discussed above.⁹² Quire H, which precedes the *Awntyrs* quire, is copied on stock L, which occurs throughout Lincoln 91, most notably in the copying of the second half of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, begun on stock B but finished on stock L, dated to 1431-47. The quire following the *Awntyrs* booklet, quire K, is then copied on a mixture of paper stocks: A (a bull, comparable to *Briquet* 2804/5, dated to 1438-6); E (a sole of a shoe, comparable to *Briquet* 13617/18, c. 1426-30) and K (crossed axes, not traceable to *Briquet*).⁹³ Although the dates of these stocks are earlier, they appear elsewhere only in Thornton's later copied texts: the prose *Alexander* written on stocks K and E is considered to be one of the latest texts copied by Thornton, bound at the beginning of Lincoln 91, forming Booklet I. Similarly, stock A appears elsewhere only in Booklet I of BL Add. 31042 in the production of the *Cursor Mundi*, also considered to be one of the latest texts copied by Thornton.⁹⁴ The use of a mixture of sheets within one small quire – a gathering of only eight bifolia – further suggests that Thornton was using up what remained of an earlier paper supply to complete the copying of *Sir Perceval of Gales*, the text directly following the *Awntyrs*. It appears that this was the last text copied by Thornton, and certainly after the reorganization of the quire. A scribal note in Thornton's hand on the final folio of quire I (fol. 163v) reads 'here is ix quayers', which has subsequently been crossed out. This would indicate that quires A-I at one time existed as an unbound unit of texts, beginning with the prose *Alexander* of

⁹² Horrall, 'Watermarks', p. 385; Thompson, 'Appendix: The Watermarks', *London Thornton Manuscript*.

⁹³ Horrall, 'Watermarks', p. 385; Thompson, 'Appendix: The Watermarks', *London Thornton Manuscript*.

⁹⁴ Hanna, 'The Growth', pp. 51-55.

Booklet I and ending with the *Awntyrs* at the end of Booklet II.⁹⁵ It is only later, with Thornton's copying of *Sir Perceval*, that Thornton's book of romances is extended to ten quires, making the note on folio 163v obsolete, hence its being crossed out. This order of copying is further supported by Keiser's assessment of Thornton's developing scribal hand: the *Awntyrs* text features the consistent use of the earlier 'r' letterform identified by Keiser, whilst the texts which both precede and follow the *Awntyrs* in quire I feature later adaptations of Thornton's script. Towards the end of producing both manuscripts, Keiser argues that Thornton began to 'move from the graph that is so easy to mistake for a 'y' to the runic form "(th)"', which he uses with consistency throughout *Sir Perceval*.⁹⁶ There is thus much evidence to argue that quire I at one time existed as an independent booklet containing only the *Awntyrs* poem.

Much of the damage sustained to quire I likely occurred during this time. Owen, in observing the manuscript prior to its conservation, stated that '[q]uire I is unique in that *all* its leaves had become detached and the whole quire is now made up of singletons'.⁹⁷ It is likely that the fifteenth-century repair of the torn folios (fols 154-58) occurred at the same time as the quire's refolding: a practical solution which provided Thornton with the necessary space to finish copying *Sir Eglamour*, whilst also helping to preserve the *Awntyrs* text. It is at this stage that the quire, having been refolded, is attached to the other romances of Booklet II. However, according to Thornton's scribal note, these texts remained in 'quayers', suggesting the romances of Booklet II remained unbound, or loosely bound (with parchment or textile for example), and may have circulated in this material form prior to both the copying of *Sir Perceval* and the eventual binding of the manuscript with 'thick oaken boards, covered with white leather, and fastened with a

⁹⁵ Thompson, 'Compiler in Action', p. 123.

⁹⁶ Keiser, 'Gentleman, Reader and Scribe', pp. 79-87.

⁹⁷ A. E. B. Owen, as quoted in Thompson, 'Compiler in Action', p. 123.

clasp’.⁹⁸ The production and circulation of the *Awntyrs* as an independent booklet is further indicated by an inscription written by Thornton following the ending of the *Awntyrs* poem, halfway down folio 161r. This inscription reads ‘*explicit libere* [sic]’ (here ends the book). The use of the term “book” here is meant, I believe, in the same manner that it is employed in the letter of CUL, MS Dd.11.45 and used similarly by the author of the Pastons’ inventory, both discussed above. Whether this inscription was written prior to the incorporation of *Sir Eglamour* and the attachment of the *Awntyrs* to the preceding eight quires or not, it is evident that the *Awntyrs* was at some point regarded to be the final text of Booklet II, a compilation of romances beginning and ending with Arthur.

The evolution of Thornton’s manuscripts, exemplified by the continued adaptation of quire I, demonstrates the many possible forms of the text that existed before its being bound into a large compilation. With each material form the text could have been used and read differently: read independently as a standalone poem, transmitted as a solo-text in a single gathering of unbound folios to be read by members of the Thornton household, or travelling with acquaintances; read by friends in different counties and in different contexts, not always necessarily by a secular, gentry household audience. At the same time, Thornton could have continued to copy other texts into other unbound gatherings, which could have led similarly separate material lives. The *Awntyrs* then becomes connected to the other romances of Booklet II, though still lacking a formal binding. The text then has the potential to have been used either separately from this context or read within it. Finally, as a bound manuscript, the function of the text fundamentally changes, becoming fixed in place within Lincoln 91. The multiplicity of forms as demonstrated by the *Awntyrs* challenges the definitions of the household manuscript, conceived as one book

⁹⁸ This is thought to be the original binding of the manuscript, dating from the fifteenth century and described by Sir Frederick Madden in 1839, who replaced this with his own binding, in turn replaced by S. R. Cockerell in 1975 to more closely match the medieval binding. See: ‘MS 91 (A.5. 2)’, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library*, ed. by Rodney M. Thomson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 65-69 (p. 65).

to be read in the domestic space. Though produced within a household context, its earlier material forms mean it is far from confined to the home. Rather, it is an individual, connected to, but independent from, the household, free to move beyond the family home to engage with others, before returning to its final resting place. The act of binding can then be seen essentially as an act of preservation. Since the texts could serve more use to more people as independent, unbound gatherings, what motivations lay behind binding them, other than to protect and to keep them? It is clear from the damage sustained to the *Awntyrs* booklet, existing as a fragment of single leaves, torn and sewn back together, that had it not been bound into Lincoln 91, it would have been unlikely to survive at all. This may provide answers as to why romances are almost exclusively extant in large, multi-text compilations. This form does not necessarily exemplify how these texts were actively read, but rather, how they were kept by their medieval readers, wanting to preserve the fragile folios of their favourite poems.

The evidence for both the alliterative *Morte Arthure* and the *Awntyrs* being produced and used by Thornton as unbound booklets gives some indication of how other Arthurian romances may also have been engaged with by other late-medieval readers. The text of *Sir Perceval*, although unique to Lincoln 91, features some dialectal features that connect it to the region of Doncaster. Hanna has argued that it was likely copied by Thornton from the same exemplar as several other texts of his two manuscripts which share these dialectal features, including the three Booklet II romances *Octavian*, *Sir Isumbras*, and *The Earl of Toulouse*.⁹⁹ These three poems can be found copied consecutively into the quires directly following the alliterative *Morte Arthure* in Lincoln 91 and are also found copied together in several other fifteenth-century manuscripts,

⁹⁹ Hanna, 'The Growth', p. 61. The other texts Hanna argues Thornton sourced from this exemplar are: *The Siege of Milan*, *Winner and Wastour*, *The Parlement of Thre Ages*, and *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*.

indicating that they may have circulated together as a group.¹⁰⁰ The recurrence of the same romances in several manuscripts has led some scholars such as Ad Putter to argue that exemplars of vernacular texts in the fifteenth century ‘often comprised a standard selection of contemporary bestsellers’.¹⁰¹ Hanna argues that Thornton must have had access to his exemplar for an extended period of time, and furthermore, must have intentionally copied the texts from it into separate quires, rather than follow the order of the exemplar.¹⁰² This may indeed be the case, but we must also entertain the possibility that Thornton received several texts from this region. Though featuring the same dialect, there is no evidence to suggest that all the texts from the so-called Doncaster exemplar were indeed from one exemplar but may have consisted of several independent booklets of texts sent to Thornton over time. There is enough evidence to substantiate that Arthurian romances were circulating independently, thus it is entirely possible that *Sir Perceval* was acquired by Thornton as an independent booklet from an acquaintance associated with this region, before being copied into the end of the quire containing the *Awntyrs*. Furthermore, there is evidence of *Sir Perceval* having circulated more widely, potentially also within London. Chaucer’s reference to *Sir Perceval* in his tail-rhyme parody *The Tale of Sir Thopas* suggests that this poem, like so many other Middle English Arthurian romances, existed in more copies than now survive, including copies circulating in the capital: not only was Chaucer aware of this text, but his reference to the romance suggests he expected his audience to also recognise and respond to it.¹⁰³ Thornton’s addition of *Sir Perceval* shows a desire to collect multiple Arthurian romances, having already copied both the alliterative *Morte* and the *Awntyrs*. *Sir Perceval* is the only surviving English romance besides Malory’s later text, *Le Morte Darthur*, to feature Sir Perceval as the hero, a knight made

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix G for manuscripts that share texts with Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91.

¹⁰¹ *Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, eds Putter and Gilbert, p. 5.

¹⁰² Hanna, ‘The Growth’, p. 57.

¹⁰³ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Tale of Sir Thopas* [VII 915-16], *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 212-17 (p. 216, line 916).

popular by the twelfth-century French romances of Chrétien de Troyes.¹⁰⁴ Its inclusion in the booklet of romances shows that Robert Thornton engaged with a vibrant literary culture, interested in different forms of poetry, including multiple Arthurian romances which seem to have been widely circulated in fifteenth-century England.

Lincoln 91 can be closely associated to Robert Thornton and his family. Thornton's manuscript features contemporary inscriptions by family members, copies of the family sigil, and other such features which intimately link his books with his household. There is even an initial which is illustrated to form a pun on the family's name, featuring a thorn-bush upon a tonne-barrel. George R. Keiser has worked extensively on the documents surrounding Thornton, work that has been contributed to more recently by Michael Johnston.¹⁰⁵ Robert Thornton was a gentleman of some standing in the North Riding of Yorkshire, born at East Newton Hall, he became lord of the estate in 1419 and was distrained for knighthood in 1458, meaning that he must have had an income of at least £40 per annum.¹⁰⁶ According to the network Keiser outlines, he was an active member of the local gentry, appointed as a tax collector for the North Riding in 1453. This places Thornton in the orbit of several influential local figures, including William Gascoigne and Brian Stapleton, members of parliament 'from ambitious families which had marital connections with such other families as the Scropes, the Rooses, and the Percies'. Keiser records Thornton as witness to several documents which further connect him to John Kempe (d. 1447), archbishop of York; Richard Neville, 5th Earl of Salisbury (d. 1460); Ralph Greystoke (d. 1487), 5th baron of Greystoke; John and Nicholas Clyffe, chaplains in

¹⁰⁴ Mary Flowers Braswell, 'Sir Perceval of Galles: Introduction', *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, ed. by Mary Flowers Braswell (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ George R. Keiser, 'Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 91: Life and Milieu of the Scribe', *Studies in Bibliography*, 32 (1979), 158-79; George R. Keiser, 'More Light on the Life and Milieu of Robert Thornton', *Studies in Bibliography*, 36 (1983), 111-19; Keiser, 'Gentleman, Reader and Scribe'; Michael Johnston, 'A New Document Relating to the Life of Robert Thornton', *The Library*, 8.3 (2007), 304-13.

¹⁰⁶ Keiser, 'Life and Milieu', p. 158; Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, p. 87.

the city of York; John Thryske, mayor of York; and Richard Warter and Thomas Ridley, aldermen of York.¹⁰⁷

It is the proximity of Thornton to the affinities of men such as Richard Neville (d. 1460) and Ralph Greystoke (d. 1487) which are of key significance to the *Awntyrs*. Having argued previously in Chapter 3 for the potential connection of the *Awntyrs* to the Neville family, it is interesting that Thornton can also be found to have some connection to the Nevilles. Robert Thornton is recorded as a witness to a quitclaim in a document dated 1449 which references several lands belonging to Ralph Greystoke.¹⁰⁸ Henderskelf in the North Riding was the principal residence of the barony of Greystoke, in the immediate vicinity of several of Thornton's own landholdings. As one of the wealthiest families in the area, it is highly likely that Thornton would have had some interaction with the household of Greystoke and the Nevilles to whom they were closely related; Ralph Greystoke was himself indentured to Richard Neville in 1447. It is further interesting that Ralph Greystoke's father, John Greystoke (d. 1436) was involved in visits to treat with the Scots in 1424, the same year Joan Neville married James I Scotland.¹⁰⁹ As discussed in Chapter 3, this may have been the occasion for which the *Awntyrs* was commissioned.¹¹⁰ Ralph Greystoke's mother was Elizabeth Ferrers, daughter of Joan Neville (d. 1440) Countess of Westmorland by her first husband, Sir Robert Ferrers.¹¹¹ This presents a potential line of transmission for the *Awntyrs*. We can imagine the text circulating within the affinity of the Nevilles, in a way not dissimilar to how John Shirley is shown to be acquiring and then disseminating texts as a member of the household of the Earl of Warwick. As Margaret Connolly has argued: 'Shirley's selections of texts were intended for circulation within his

¹⁰⁷ Keiser, 'Life and Milieu', pp. 158-68.

¹⁰⁸ *Calendar of the Close Rolls*, Henry VI, 1447-54 (1947), vol. v, p. 111; TNA: C.54/299.

¹⁰⁹ Keith Dockray, 'Greystoke Family (per. 1321-1487)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/54524>> [accessed 4 September 2018].

¹¹⁰ See Ch. 3.4 'The Neville Connection'; Allen, 'Place-Names', p. 183.

¹¹¹ Dockray, 'Greystoke Family'.

own social milieu:...the “company” of the noble household, comprising the different social categories of “knight squyer or lady | or other estat” and, as Joel Fredell has demonstrated, John Shirley likely had access to and was copying texts as booklets.¹¹² It is entirely plausible that Thornton may have acquired texts through his social connections with the Greystokes and the Nevilles, copied these texts, and then recirculated them. Thornton concludes his version of the poem with a rhyming couplet that reads: ‘This fferly by felle full sothely to sayne | In yggillwede fforeste at þe Ternwathelayne’ (*Awntyrs*, Lincoln 91, 592-93). These lines re-emphasise the location of the marvel, suggesting Thornton was perhaps familiar with this location and aware of its significance. Thornton further emends his text in a line that describes the circulation of Gaynour’s letter written in the final stanza, this line is emended to also include the text’s circulation to secular learned men: ‘Dukes Erles Baronns and bechoppes of the beste’ (*Awntyrs*, Lincoln 91, 583).¹¹³ This may represent Thornton’s own means of receiving the text, through Richard Neville, Earl and Ralph Greystoke, Baron, showing the scribe’s desire to more directly align himself with these powerful members of the local aristocracy.

An interesting potential connection between the Thornton household and the female religious community at the priory of Nun Monkton has been highlighted by Keiser as a potential source for Thornton’s devotional texts. Robert Thornton was named executor for the will of his neighbour Richard Pickering, knight of Oswaldkirk (d. 1441). Sir Richard Pickering served as Sheriff and Justice of the Peace in the North Riding which would have also brought him into direct contact with the wider network of local aristocracy described above.¹¹⁴ Keiser argues that these two men and their families must have been relatively close, this relationship giving Thornton potential access to texts, establishing that the *Liber*

¹¹² Connolly, ‘Compiling the Book’, p. 13; Fredell, ‘Lydgate’s Pamphlet Poetry’, p. 62.

¹¹³ In contrast, see the text in London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a, which reads ‘Boþe lerid men and bysshopis right of þe best’, fol. 286^v.

¹¹⁴ Keiser, ‘More Light’, p. 114.

de diversis medicinis copied by Thornton in Lincoln 91 (fols 280-331) was copied from the same exemplar as that in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A.393, in which several members of the Pickering family are named in the margins. Keiser identifies the priory of St Mary at Nun Monkton as a prestigious institution for the daughters of prosperous Yorkshire families, including the Pickerings; Richard Pickering's sister Joan, is identified in his will as a nun of the priory at 1441.¹¹⁵ Although only a small Benedictine community, there are several books that can be connected with the nuns at Nun Monkton. Keiser highlights documents which show that several of the nuns at the priory had close connections to officials at York minster, including John de Thorp, canon who in 1343 made several bequests to the priory and requested to be buried there. The widow Elizabeth Sywardby, a contemporary of Thornton and of similar wealth and status, gives both books and money to her niece, Elizabeth, also a nun at Nun Monkton.¹¹⁶ Agnes Stapilton (d. 1448) is recorded as having owned several books in Latin, French and English, including a 'Bonaventure', 'Prik of Conscience', 'Chastisynge of goddeschildren' and text of 'Vice and vertues'.¹¹⁷ Keiser notes that this latter text on 'Vice and vertues' was bequeathed by Agnes to the nuns of Nun Monkton at her death in 1448. Agnes' son, Sir Brian Stapleton, can be connected to Robert Thornton as the MP for Yorkshire at the same time Robert Thornton was acting as tax collector for the county. Of even more interest is Keiser's analysis that several of the devotional texts copied in Thornton's manuscripts seem especially adapted for a female audience; 'dere syster' inserted into the text of Walter Hilton's *Epistle on Mixed Life*, one of several examples that convincingly suggest that 'Thornton probably obtained his exemplars for these works from a house for female

¹¹⁵ Keiser, 'Gentleman, Reader and Scribe', p. 71.

¹¹⁶ 'Keiser, 'More Light', p. 115.

¹¹⁷ Cavanaugh, 'Books Privately Owned', p. 816.

religious'.¹¹⁸ Thus, the nearby religious house of Nun Monkton possibly provided some of these texts for Thornton.

It may be that some female members of Thornton's own household had relationships with nuns at the priory and we must not exclude the possibility that women were also active in acquiring texts for the use of the household, especially given the implied female audience of the *Awntyrs*, as discussed in Chapter 3. CUL, MS Ff.1.6, otherwise known as the Findern manuscript, reveals a gentry household in the North Midlands engaging in a vibrant collaborative textual community which included several women. As Nicola McDonald has observed:

In addition to the Derbyshire Finderns (with whom the manuscript is now identified), various, predominantly female, members of the Cruker, Cotton, Frauncis, Shirley and Hungerford families - all gentry neighbours of the Finderns and variously connected with them or with each other through marriage - copied items into the manuscript and wrote, or had their names written, in its margins. Other named scribes, all men, have been loosely identified as 'estate servants'.¹¹⁹

The Findern manuscript shares with Lincoln 91 the romance *Sir Degrevant* and similarly emends some of its texts to address women readers.¹²⁰ Because of the numerous scripts visible in the Findern anthology it has been understood to be a collaborative effort, yet the acquiring of texts, reading of texts, and engaging in textual communities does not necessitate those involved to inscribe their name in the manuscripts for their participation to exist. As Mellisa Furrow has argued '[g]eneral impressions suggest that men did own more romances because they owned more manuscripts. It is also true, of course, that men owned more houses than women did, yet conclusions cannot be drawn from that information that more men than women lived in houses'.¹²¹ Therefore the uses of the

¹¹⁸ Keiser, 'More Light', p. 116.

¹¹⁹ Nicola McDonald, 'Fragments of *(Have Your) Desire: Brome Women at Play*', *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England*, ed. by Maryanne Kowaleski and P. J. P. Goldberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 232-58 (p. 234)

¹²⁰ Meale, 'Laywomen and Their Books', p. 141.

¹²¹ Furrow, *Expectations of Romance*, p. 227.

Thornton texts for the households they served, including women, needs to be considered, perhaps thinking of them as collaboratively engaged with, if not collaboratively written.

4.4 Princeton, University Library, MS Taylor 9

Princeton, University Library, MS Taylor 9, as the only surviving *Awntyrs* text to be copied entirely on parchment, has survived in a booklet of just three texts, later bound with a second booklet of manorial records:

Booklet I (folios 1-58)¹²²

1. *The Awntyrs off Arthure: DIMEV 2628, Manual 1.I.30; fols 1r-15v*
2. *Sir Amadace: DIMEV 5552, Manual 1.I.113; fols 16r-33v*
3. *The Avowyngge of Arthur: DIMEV 1885, Manual 1.I.32; fols 33v-58r*

Booklet II (folios 59-98)

1. Manorial records for the manor of Hale, dating 1399-1413; pp 1-80

This codex, beginning with the *Awntyrs* and concluding with the stylistically related Arthurian text *The Avowyngge off Arthure*, unique to this manuscript, further shows that audiences were interested in owning multiple Arthurian romances. The romance *Sir Amadace*, situated between these two Arthurian poems, survives in one other manuscript, Edinburgh, NLS, MS Advocates 19.3.1 (the Heege MS), both copies lacking their opening folio.¹²³ Without being able to rely on paper stock evidence, the manuscript's production is harder to date. Booklet I however, has been dated palaeographically to the middle of the fifteenth century and located dialectally to South-Western Lancashire.¹²⁴ The records of Booklet II, although contemporaneous to the copying of the romance texts, are written in a different *anglicana* script, which Johnston states is 'consistent with mid-fifteenth-century documentary hands'.¹²⁵ The records are non-consecutive, dating variously from 1379-1464, and relate to the manor of Hale, which at that time belonged to John Ireland II, a

¹²² See Appendix D for a full description and collation of Princeton, University Library, MS Taylor 9.

¹²³ Edinburgh, NLS, MS Advocates 19.3.1 also shares a copy of *Sir Isumbras* with Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91. See Appendix G.

¹²⁴ *LALME*, LP 25.

¹²⁵ Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, p. 226.

country gentleman of similar status and wealth to Robert Thornton. The opening and closing folios of the manuscript are heavily damaged and discoloured with mould and damp, particularly the first and final folios of Booklet I, with the ink severely faded on folio 1 and the blank final folio of 60v extremely yellowed. The two halves are bound within an oak-board binding that still survives, though extremely worn. The binding of the two Booklets likely occurred in the first half of the sixteenth century, dated from the survival of inscriptions in both parts of the manuscript: the name ‘Thomas Yrlond’ appears in the lower margin of folio 49r of Booklet I and on p.68 of Booklet II. This is likely the Thomas Ireland who inherited Hale Manor in 1525 and died in 1545, as has been argued previously by Michael Johnston.¹²⁶

Michael Johnston is the first scholar to have treated this manuscript at length, both in his thesis and in his 2014 monograph *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England*.¹²⁷ Johnston, in referring to the two parts of Princeton Taylor 9, argues that ‘it is only logical to read them against one another’, concluding that the two halves are representative of the tensions that existed between the aristocratic ideal of largesse, presented by the two romances *Sir Amadace* and *The Avowyng of Arthure*, and the economic reality of maintaining a household, as detailed in the manorial accounts. Johnston argues that the manuscript, when regarded as a whole book, represents the key concerns and interests of a fifteenth-century gentry family. This is problematic for several reasons. First, as Johnston correctly identifies, the two parts of the manuscript were not originally bound together, potentially existing as independent booklets for an entire century – the *terminus ad quem* for the binding being as late as 1545, the year in which Thomas Ireland whose name is inscribed in both halves of the codex died. The Booklets are written in different hands, with separate sets of quire signatures and separate numbering systems –

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 226.

¹²⁷ Johnston, ‘Sociology of Middle English Romance’.

part one has traditional manuscript foliation, whereas part two is numbered using Arabic numerals, with each recto and verso numbered.¹²⁸ Secondly, Johnston's lack of engagement with the *Awntyrs* of Princeton Taylor 9 disrupts his otherwise "whole book" approach. If, as he argues, the manorial accounts inform the readings of the romances which precede it, an interpretation of the *Awntyrs*, the opening text of the manuscript, should also be considered, especially since it was owned and read by multiple gentry households. Lastly, Johnston's interpretation of the layout of the texts presumes that the manuscript was made by 'a local clerk or even someone in the employ of their household' and that it was 'produced and consumed in the same place – almost certainly the household of the Irelands'.¹²⁹ This limiting of the romances to the household context is, Johnston argues, supported by the presence of the manorial accounts, which directly connect the poems to this one gentry family. However, when the material details of Princeton Taylor 9 are reconsidered alongside some of the textual features of the poems, other reception contexts become possible. Certainly, both booklets performed an important function for the fifteenth-century gentry household, however, they functioned separately, and the material gatherings of the romances would have existed separately from the manorial documents, engaged with in very different circumstances and by different audiences. I would further suggest that the motivation behind their being bound into one codex was one of preservation, suggesting that at the moment of their binding, their use had thus fundamentally changed from that of the mid-fifteenth century. As it is the use of romance texts that is of central concern to this thesis, I shall only be focusing on Booklet I of Princeton Taylor 9.

We can gain greater insight into how audiences were engaging with Middle English literature by including an assessment of the *Awntyrs* in a study of Princeton Taylor 9,

¹²⁸ Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, p. 225.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

especially as it is the only text shared by both Lincoln 91 and Princeton Taylor 9. Despite this, Johnston omits this romance from his study. Johnston argues that ‘*The Awntyrs* and *Sir Perceval* do different ideological work than do the stories of landed knights, such as *Isumbras* or *Degrevant*.’ The ‘ideological work’ around which Johnston builds his definition of a gentry romance is centred on four motifs, all relating to either landowning, social status, or economic difficulty, or indeed a combination of these themes. The *Awntyrs* meets these criteria: the second half of the poem is entirely concerned with the protagonist Sir Galeron, a provincial knight who has become disenfranchised by Sir Gawain, and so is without both his land and its accompanying aristocratic status. It also includes a demonstration of Sir Gawain’s largesse towards the knight who has come to challenge him. Johnston attempts to further support his selection of romances with codicological evidence. He argues that Thornton treated the four romances *Octavian*, *Sir Isumbras*, *Sir Eglamour* and *Sir Degrevant* as a distinct group, copying them all into the same codicological unit of Lincoln 91, intentionally separate from the Arthurian texts. He states: ‘[I]deally, one imagines, Thornton would have placed *The Awntyrs* and *Sir Perceval* near the Alliterative *Morte*, thereby creating a series of Arthurian romances’, further arguing that Thornton was unable to do so only because he had already begun copying *Octavian* into the end of the quires containing the alliterative *Morte*.¹³⁰ However, as has been discussed above, this is to misunderstand the order in which Thornton compiled his books. Thornton almost certainly copied the *Awntyrs* prior to his copying of *Octavian*, as is evident from developments in his scribal hand and the paper stocks used. Rather, the evidence suggests that the alliterative *Morte Arthure* and the *Awntyrs* were copied intentionally into their own independent booklets. I would argue that this was a practical rather than ideological decision to allow for their independent circulation and that it is the later processes of compilation that has obscured this intention. The separate material texts of the alliterative

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 183.

Morte and the *Awntyrs* were subsumed into the larger codicological unit of Booklet II as the desire to accommodate more romances into a larger book takes priority. The presence of the *Awntyrs* in the opening of Booklet I of Princeton Taylor 9 is representative of the romance's circulation as an independent text amongst a gentry audience, an example of the poem's earlier material form prior to its incorporation into a larger codex. So, although very different in their final material form – Booklet II of Lincoln 91 containing twenty-one texts compared to the modest three items of Booklet I in Princeton Taylor 9 – together they reveal different stages of the same type of use: the late-medieval gentry consuming the *Awntyrs* as a small independent booklet.

Princeton Taylor 9 proves much harder to connect to established textual communities. Other than the *Awntyrs*, which survives in the four manuscripts discussed in this thesis, the poem *Sir Amadace* survives in only one other witness, *The Avowyng of Arthure* being unique to Princeton Taylor 9. Edinburgh, NLS, MS Advocates 19.3.1, otherwise known as the Heege manuscript for its scribe and compiler, was produced in the last quarter of the fifteenth century in the Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire region. This manuscript is one of several large multi-text compilations to survive from the fifteenth century and is witness to several romance texts, including *Sir Gowther*, *Sir Isumbras* and *Sir Amadace*. It therefore also shares material with Lincoln 91, which likewise contains the romance *Sir Isumbras*.¹³¹ The Heege manuscript is a paper codex which Thompson has argued represents 'a series of separately produced and unbound booklet volumes – a medieval "library *in parvo*". He compares it to the booklets produced by Thornton, observing that 'MS Advocates 19.3.1 quires betray signs that they may have led a temporary, more uncertain, existence apart from the larger collection in which they are

¹³¹ See appendix G for related manuscripts.

now bound'.¹³² Both the Heege manuscript and Princeton Taylor 9 copies of *Sir Amadace* are lacking their opening folio, suggesting that this text likely circulated independently, much like the *Awntyrs*. The Heege manuscript also contains material analogous to the *Awntyrs*, with the source text of the poem *The Trental of St Gregory* present in this volume. Phillipa Hardman has argued that the selection of texts, some of which show signs of minor editorial adaptation, support the view that the booklets were 'variously designed to meet the different needs of a range of readers within the household, adult and juvenile, male and female'.¹³³ It is likely therefore that the booklet of Princeton Taylor 9 could similarly represent what was once a much larger collection of texts, produced in a similar format to Advocates 19.3.1, featuring similar texts and also witness to minor editorial adaptations, perhaps functioning as part of a "library *in parvo*" for the Irelands of Hale.

Significant thematic and aesthetic similarities between Lincoln 91 and Princeton Taylor 9 become apparent when the Arthurian material is considered. Upon copying the beginning of *Octavian* into the folios following the alliterative *Morte*, and the ending of *Sir Eglamour* into the folios preceding the *Awntyrs*, Thornton connected the "gentry romances" into one codicological unit with the Arthurian material, compiling a book which both begins and ends with Arthurian romance. All the texts inbetween are then arguably encompassed into a wider Arthurian narrative; the knights of the romances becoming knights of the round table by their textual situation. Thornton is adding the knights of Sir Isumbras, Sir Degrevant and Sir Eglamour to the affinity of King Arthur. Similarly, the scribe of Princeton Taylor 9 engages in the same literary act when he returns to an Arthurian text to end the romance booklet, *Sir Amadace* enclosed by the stories of Arthurian knights. Both Booklet II of Lincoln 91 and Booklet I of Princeton Taylor 9 can

¹³² John J. Thompson, 'Collecting Middle English Romances and Some Related Book-Production Activities in the Later Middle Ages', *Romance in Medieval England*, eds Mills et. al., pp. 17-38 (p. 24).

¹³³ Hardman, 'Domestic Learning', p. 28.

thus be interpreted as Arthurian books, and it seems worthwhile to consider the texts of the alliterative *Morte*, *Sir Perceval* and the *Awntyrs* alongside Johnston's reading of the "gentry romances".

The text of *Awntyrs* in Princeton Taylor 9 begins without a title, written in a single column, with a three-line opening initial that has not been carried out. A guide-letter is no longer discernible, but they appear elsewhere in the text on folios 6v and 11v. The writing is spaced out, with a consistent average of twenty-two lines to a page and large, blank margins; over 40 per cent of the folio is blank. The opening recto, though very worn, is still legible, most of the damage sustained to the bottom and right-hand margins of the page. The text takes up a total of 15 folios over two gatherings, finishing at the end of folio 15v. There is a *lacuna* of one folio directly following, which likely contained the opening lines of *Sir Amadace*, the text which is copied into the end of the second gathering. The *Awntyrs* is divided into three episodes – or 'ffytes' in three, near-equal parts of 260, 230, and 220 lines respectively, the significance of these divisions discussed in Chapter 2.¹³⁴ Each of the divisions is marked at its end by the words 'a ffyte', aligned to the right of the text, followed by two blank lines, such as can be observed on folios 7v and 12v. Each new 'ffyte' is opened with a two-line initial featuring a guide letter. The text's conclusion is then marked by the ascription 'ffinis'. Both *Sir Amadace* and *The Avowyng of Arthur* are also divided in this way, into three 'ffytes', though the final 'ffyte' of *The Avowyng* is recorded by the words '*primus passus*', potentially reflecting the words of the exemplar at hand. The division of *Awntyrs* into three parts is not unique to this version of the poem, as has been discussed in previous chapters, with Oxford Douce 324 similarly dividing the poem into three episodes, beginning at lines 1, 339, and 508. However, the specific divisions in Princeton Taylor 9 emphasise the knightly concerns of the text in a way not observed in the other three versions, calling attention to the acts of Sir Gawain, placing the

¹³⁴ See Ch. 2.3 'Episodes and Authors: A Question of Structure'.

poem more firmly in the genre of Gawain romance, with a particular emphasis on the ownership of lands, as well as the morality and chivalry of Sir Gawain versus that of the minor provincial knight Sir Galeron. Gates has noted the numerous additions of the formulaic phrase ‘Gawayne the gode’ to mentions of Gawain in Princeton Taylor 9, and as discussed in Chapter 3, the text amends the wheel in stanza 45 to once again emphasise Gawain, making him the undisputable hero of this romance (*Awntyrs* 594-600).¹³⁵ This version of the poem can therefore be seen to be engaging in the same exploration of knightly ideals outlined by Johnston in his reading of the other two romances of the manuscript.

It is uncertain whether the layout of the poem in Princeton Taylor 9 is the scribe’s own design or followed from an exemplar. However, certain features of the text suggest a degree of unfamiliarity with the poetic form of the *Awntyrs*. For the first eighty lines of the poem, the scribe appears to have trouble with the complex stanza construction; each thirteen-line stanza is made up of nine long alliterative lines, and four shorter lines, rhyming *ababababdddc*. The scribe copies the first two stanzas of the text on folio 1r as ten-long and two-short lines, followed by six-long and four-short lines. The following folios 1v and 2r show no coherent stanza form, with varying sections of long and short lines. It is not until folio 3r that the thirteen-line stanza form is recognised, with the remainder of the poem copied with a regular layout of nine-long and four-short lines. The scribe attempted to present the stanzas carefully on the opening folio of the text, before copying the next folios with less attention. The copy of *Awntyrs* in Lincoln 91 similarly shows a lack of recognition of the thirteen-line stanza. The first two folios of the text are copied only as long alliterative lines, from folios 154r to 155v. It is only from folio 156r that Thornton then begins to copy his text as nine-long and four-short lines, observing the poetic form. This shared issue may be indicative of defective or damaged exemplars

¹³⁵ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, pp. 58-59; See Ch. 3.3 ‘Might and Mercy’.

circulating in the North of England, or in the very least, exemplars which bore little or no attempt to represent the text's poetic form. In contrast, the scribes of Lambeth 491a and Oxford Douce 324 both copy the stanzas of the text neatly and without error for the poem's entirety, using markers to indicate the beginning of each new stanza and rhyme brackets to highlight the rhyme scheme of the last five lines, rhyming *-cdddc*. These two manuscripts were most likely commercial productions, Lambeth 491a potentially to be used as an exemplar by its scribe and Oxford Douce 324 perhaps forming part of a stationer's stock. This kind of intended use may have required a clearer visual communication of the verse form, either for the ease of the scribe's reproduction of the text or for presentation purposes to potential customers. This differs from Lincoln 91 and Princeton Taylor 9 where the representation of the verse form may have been less of a priority because of how the audience was engaging with the text.

Several features of Princeton Taylor 9 reveal the scribe to be well-practiced: the use of guide letters for the initials, the consistent ruling and spacing of the page, the use of wide margins, and the employment of regular quire signatures, are all suggestive of a scribe who is used to producing texts. The quires are marked with a series of letters, rather than catchwords, which would ensure the gatherings followed the correct order. For example, on folio 13r there appears the letter 'B' in the top left margin to mark the beginning of the second quire; on the last folio of the same quire, folio 23v, the letter 'C' appears in the bottom right margin to indicate the end of that same quire. The opening of the next quire then features the letter 'D' in the top margin, and so on. This confirms that the scribe was likely used to producing texts in booklets that were to remain either unbound or in an informal, loose binding, perhaps also preparing several texts simultaneously. These features suggest that the scribe of Princeton Taylor 9, featuring as it does several features of its presentation that are similar to contemporary commercial productions, may also have been a commercial scribe, the booklet either being specifically

commissioned by the Hales or purchased for their use. There is little manuscript evidence to connect Booklet I of Princeton Taylor 9 to the fifteenth-century household of the Irelands: the only inscriptions relating to this family date from the sixteenth-century at the very earliest, and the manorial court records, copied in a different hand, were likewise not connected to the romances until the sixteenth-century. Just because the scribe of Princeton Taylor 9 copies the romances in a south-western Lancashire dialect, making him local to the Irelands of Hale, does not necessitate that he was producing these texts for this household. It is equally possible that this family acquired the text later, perhaps through a connection with the scribe or with others in the same social network. What can be established from the manuscript is that the scribe had access to parchment of a fair quality, had experience of preparing texts and seems to have been local to the Lancashire region.

The dialect of Princeton Taylor 9 benefits from some further discussion. The analysis of the three romance texts by *LALME* has identified the scribe as having a south-west Lancashire dialect, and thus has located the manuscript in this region. This does not however, limit the circulation or reception of the texts to this area. The Princeton text of *Awntyrs* features several Midland forms, enough to suggest that the scribe potentially sourced his copy of the poem from this region. For example, the scribe uses the unusual form “mekille” (much), found elsewhere only in manuscripts of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire dialects.¹³⁶ This is one of several forms used by the scribe for “much”, indicating it is perhaps a relict; ‘a form not part of a scribe’s own dialect, but an exotic that is perpetuated from an exemplar whose dialect differs from that of the copyist’.¹³⁷ Other examples confirm the texts association with this region, the form “quen” (when) for example, is located in manuscripts mapped to Lancashire, the North Riding of Yorkshire,

¹³⁶ LP 46, Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College, MS 89 (Lincs.); LP 180, Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 1053 (O.1.29) (Lincs.); LP 504, London, BL, MS Sloane 213 (Notts.), *LALME*.

¹³⁷ Benskin and McIntosh, ‘General Introduction’, *LALME*, <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/intros/atlas_gen_intro.html> [accessed 1 September 2018].

Derbyshire, and again, Lincolnshire.¹³⁸ Interestingly, this is a form shared with the text of Oxford Douce 324, written in a Derbyshire dialect. The occurrence of these forms in the Princeton text suggest the possibility of the poem being derived from a Midlands source, perhaps from a shared branch of transmission as the text of Oxford Douce 324, especially since both versions also divide the poem into three episodes, with the final episode opening at the same line (*Awntyrs* 508) in both texts. The existence of *Sir Amadace* also in a manuscript from this region makes this yet more likely. The existence of other dialectal forms in the text suggests that the scribe of Princeton Taylor 9 was possibly acquiring texts from well beyond his immediate locality, much in the same way as Robert Thornton. The scribe was potentially acquiring texts from Lincolnshire, or even from London since there were evidently already copies of the *Awntyrs* circulating in the capital by 1430.

There is evidence to suggest that the *Awntyrs* text of both Princeton Taylor 9 and Lincoln 91 were copied for the same type of use, the poem expected to be read aloud, perhaps for the entertainment of a household. John Ivor Carlson has carried out an analysis of the scribal profile of Robert Thornton that includes a comparison of the four *Awntyrs* texts. His conclusions reveal that in both Lincoln 91 and Princeton Taylor 9 the scribes ‘commonly inserted phrases like “he said” or “she spoke” to remove all potential for syntactic ambiguity’.¹³⁹ Carlson demonstrates that this is most frequently observable in Thornton’s text, who alters the syntactic elements to a greater degree than do the other scribes of the *Awntyrs*. He further demonstrates that this is likely the addition of the scribe himself, as Thornton frequently makes similar additions to other texts not observable in other manuscript versions. However, Princeton Taylor 9 provides the most counter examples to Thornton’s additions, suggesting that the scribe of Princeton Taylor 9 made

¹³⁸ LP 714, London, BL, MS Egerton 2622 (Derbs.); LP 127, Brough Hall (nr. Catterick): Lawson family muniments (Yorks., North Riding); LP 196 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley, MS 446 (Lincs.), *LALME*.

¹³⁹ Carlson, ‘Scribal Intentions’, p. 57.

similar changes, to only a slightly lesser degree than Thornton. Indeed, Gates has argued that the scribe of Princeton Taylor 9 often makes dialogue more explicit.¹⁴⁰ Both these copies of the text were therefore modified by their scribes, both of whom also translated the dialect of their text for their audiences. Both scribes, presumably during the process of translating, made the text more readable for a verbal performance, clarifying the dialogue of characters which would be necessary for those hearing, rather than reading the text. This suggests that the text of both manuscripts was intended to be performed, the most likely context for such a performance being the household. This by no means limits the audience to this space, as the poem could likewise have been read aloud for other audiences outside of the domestic context.

The performance of these texts only increases the likelihood of them suffering the type of damage observable in Lincoln 91; this version of *Awntyrs* is witness to extensive tears, losses of text and survives now only as single, fragmented paper sheets. Though still showing extensive signs of wear, particularly to its first and final folios, Princeton Taylor 9 has survived better only because of its more durable material form, as the only version of the poem to be copied entirely on parchment. The damage sustained to both along with the evidence of their adaptation for performance indicates that the romances were actively read and consumed by their audiences. The gentry household is most likely one of these possible audiences. When taken together, the sixteenth-century association of Princeton Taylor 9 Booklet I with the fifteenth-century manorial court records of Hale manor, the dialect of the romances, and the scribal additions to the *Awntyrs* text, means it was likely engaged with by a fifteenth-century gentry family of Lancashire, the most reasonable candidates being the Irelands of Hale.

¹⁴⁰ *Awntyrs*, ed. Gates, p. 74.

Michael Johnston has unearthed several documents which record that John Ireland (d. 1462) was of similar status and wealth to Robert Thornton, a gentleman of his local region, distrained for knighthood in the same year of 1458.¹⁴¹ At the time of his death, he owned land in Hale as well as in Bebington in Cheshire. Several documents attest to the Ireland's active participation in local gentry culture, with John named as one of eleven men assigned to raise archers for the county of Lancashire on Henry VI's orders of 1457.¹⁴² The Irelands were closely connected to the powerful Stanley family; John Stanley (d. 1414) had served as Steward of the King's Household 1405-12; his son Thomas Stanley (d. 1459) was amongst the eleven men commissioned, along with Ireland, to raise archers in 1457 after having served as MP for Lancashire in 1427, Lieutenant of Ireland 1431-37, Controller of the King's Household in 1439 as well as Chamberlain of north Wales. Thomas Stanley's son was then made the Earl of Derby in 1485 following the battle of Bosworth.¹⁴³ The families had also had several intermarriages, John Ireland marrying the daughter of John Stanley (d. 1437), engaged in business together and further serving to witness several documents together. Johnston has argued that the political situation in Lancashire, devoid of any resident magnate, meant that the Irelands 'wielded more economic power *relative to their local society*'.¹⁴⁴ The Stanleys were clearly the most powerful family of that region, and the Irelands closely aligned to them, with members of the Ireland family likely to have served in the retinue of Thomas Stanley during his Lieutenancy of Ireland.

That the Princeton Taylor 9 version of *Awntyrs* shows a marked preference for Gawain is perhaps no surprise given the location of the Irelands and the interaction of

¹⁴¹ Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, p. 87.

¹⁴² Johnston, 'Sociology of Middle English Romance', p. 269, p. 272.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 272-78; Michael J. Bennett, 'Stanley, Thomas, First Baron Stanley (1406–1459)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26278>> [accessed 4 September 2018].

¹⁴⁴ Johnston, 'Sociology of Middle English Romance', p. 275, p. 279.

Thomas Stanley with the lands of Ireland and Wales, lands from these regions awarded to Gawain in the poem following his combat with the Scottish knight Sir Gaheris. Thomas Stanley (d. 1504) can be connected to the Neville family through his marriage in the 1450s to Eleanor Neville, the granddaughter of the formidable Joan Neville (d. 1440). Bennett records Eleanor as a ‘facilitator and peacemaker’, taking the initiative to settle local disputes in her husband’s absence, including settling a territorial dispute between two Lancashire squires in 1466.¹⁴⁵ It is through the Ireland’s connection with this family that they potentially acquired the *Awntyrs*, the relicts of a Derbyshire dialect found in this version of the poem perhaps suggesting it was sourced from this location, where Sir Thomas Stanley the younger also held lands, or even from the capital, which he would have frequented in his various duties. More work into these regions, their interactions with Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as the rest of England would yield interesting results and no doubt offer greater insight into textual communities operating in Lancashire.

The romances belonging to Lincoln 91 and Princeton Taylor 9 have been interpreted as belonging to larger “household manuscripts”, an understanding which limits their reception to the local, to the space of the household and its immediate vicinity. This reception context is often taken for granted, without consideration of wider uses and alternative production and reception contexts. As men of some wealth and status, it is ever more evident that individuals such as Robert Thornton and John Ireland travelled outside of their locality, to London and other cities and towns of late-medieval Britain, dispelling any claims that the gentry were provincial. The texts of their manuscripts therefore become similarly less restricted to local contexts, even more so when we consider that these texts were produced and circulated as unbound booklets, as is the case for the Arthurian romances discussed in this chapter. The romances of these manuscripts were acquired from

¹⁴⁵ Michael J. Bennett, ‘Stanley, Thomas, First Earl of Derby (c. 1433–1504)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26279>> [accessed 4 September 2018].

far and wide, not just limited to a local textual community, but one that crossed counties, as is evident from the dialects of the scribes' exemplars. Texts, produced in booklet form could and evidently did travel with and even without their owners, being transported by friends to places far beyond the immediate vicinity of their production contexts, as is documented in CUL, MS Dd.11.45, which connects the alliterative *Morte* directly to Lincolnshire and with intersecting audiences, showing individuals outside of the gentry class, such as William Cuke, a priest, and John Salus, a Burgess, interacting with this Arthurian romance.

The production of Arthurian romance in booklets for a gentry household therefore highlights two significant points that affect how we interpret these texts: first, these romances, now compiled into large multi-text collections, originally had the potential to be used simultaneously by multiple members of a household, as well as that household's wider social circle. These romances could lead separate material lives and be encountered outside of their current textual situations, opening huge potentialities for textual interaction not realised by the current textual relationships of existing codices. Second, this type of use increased the chances of these romances becoming damaged, lost, or altogether destroyed, accounting for the fact that so few copies remain, and explaining why so many of those that do remain are present only in large, multi-text collections, such as Lincoln 91 and NLS Advocates 19.3.1. Their survival can be attributed to the care of their owners, who preserved these texts by binding them into larger books, protected by the wooden boards that henceforth housed them. This undeniably changed their function, limiting the potential uses that they could have enjoyed as independent quires. It is at this point that they become more restricted to the household and it is from this moment that they become "household books" in the form now recognised and interpreted by scholars, defined by the space in which they are kept. Princeton Taylor 9 is perhaps the best representation of how the *Awntyrs* was most likely circulating amongst the gentry in late-medieval Britain; the

manuscript displays fewer interventions by later users than any other witness to the poem and is the only copy to still survive in a medieval binding. The many stages of compilation (and later conservation) identifiable in Lincoln 91 shows both how vulnerable these texts were – especially if produced on paper – and the many material forms a text could take during the process of compiling a larger codex, each change in form creating different ways of reading, open to new interpretations. Thus, Lincoln 91 shows best why these romances have survived, where their booklet counterparts likely perished.

4.5 Conclusion

As I have argued in this chapter, all four surviving manuscript versions of the *Awntyrs* were produced as a booklet, a distinct codicological and literary unit, with material evidence to suggest that all four versions also remained unbound for some time, available, and perhaps circulating in booklet form. It seems remarkable that the only two London produced texts to have survived, out of the numerous that must have been circulating within this textual community, represent what I argue are scribal or stationer copies. The production of *Awntyrs* into small individual units or booklets, as evidenced by both Lambeth 491a and Oxford Douce 324, would suggest that the copies made from these versions may have been circulated and consumed in similar conditions. This coupled with the production of the text into paper gatherings, a cheaper and less durable material, may be the reason for such a poor survival of the poem. That a demand must have existed for the *Awntyrs* is suggested by the commercial production of the text, especially as the texts that it is copied alongside represent some of the most widely disseminated vernacular literature of the period, as well as texts by some of the most popular authors. It could be argued that, comparatively, the lack of survival of *Awntyrs* suggests its being more heavily consumed than these other, better surviving texts, given that it was copied in the same circumstances for the same expected audiences. Longer texts also seem more likely to have received a more permanent binding support, whereas a short romance such as *Awntyrs*,

needs to be bound with several other short texts to increase its chance of surviving at the same rate.

The survival, or lack thereof, of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* provides a pertinent comparison.¹⁴⁶ Only one manuscript survives, London, BL, MS Additional 59678, copied by two scribes c. 1470-83, used as an exemplar copy, with evidence that it was present in Caxton's workshop whilst he was printing the first edition of his text in 1485.¹⁴⁷ Lotte Hellinga has suggested that the print run of Caxton's *Le Morte Darthur* may have been as high as five-hundred copies, and yet only two copies survive: a complete copy now in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library and a second copy lacking eleven leaves in John Rylands University Library of Manchester.¹⁴⁸ There is also record of a third copy having existed as binding waste in a manuscript of Lincoln Cathedral Library, now lost.¹⁴⁹ The high rate of loss for this printed text indicates that it was heavily consumed. Graham Pollard has studied Caxton's method of distributing texts, and it can be argued that the market Caxton identifies for *Le Morte Darthur* would have been the same market as the *Awntyrs*, the scribes and stationers likely using the same methods of distribution for their text. The relatively short length of the *Awntyrs* means that, as an individual booklet, it would have survived particularly poorly compared to longer texts that may have circulated in a similar format. The survival of the *Awntyrs* in its two London manuscripts is a representation then of the intentional survival of this text, rather than an accidental one. The London copies have perhaps only survived because of the ways they were used, bound into a larger volume as an exemplar text, as is the case for Lambeth 491a, or potentially

¹⁴⁶ Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, London, BL, MS Additional 59678 (c. 1469); *IPMEP* 394; *Manual* 3.IX.2; *Le Morte Darthur*, printed by William Caxton (London: 1485), *STC* 801.

¹⁴⁷ *The Malory Project*, directed by Takako Kato and designed by Nick Hayward <<http://www.maloryproject.com/>> [accessed 1 September 2018].

¹⁴⁸ Lotte Hellinga, as quoted in Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory*, p. 8, fn. 24.

¹⁴⁹ Paul Needham, *The Printer & the Pardoner* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1986), 'Checklist of Caxton's Printing', pp. 83-91; Barry Gaines, *Sir Thomas Malory: An Anecdotal Bibliography of Editions, 1485-1985* (New York: AMS Press, 1990), p. 6.

existing as a stationer's display copy, as with Oxford Douce 324. It is perhaps the copies that may have been produced from these versions that were used and consumed by their audiences and which have failed to survive. Furthermore, Lambeth 491a and Oxford Douce 324 were produced at least forty years apart, revealing a continued demand for this text. Both manuscripts are potentially commercial productions, the later almost certainly so, reflecting a more organized and consumer-focused mode of copying. As such, it would only be worth producing a version of *Awntyrs* in this way if there was enough demand for vernacular Arthurian romance more generally, and for *Awntyrs* specifically. There are two questions that remain to be asked: how can we prove that texts were not just produced in booklets, but also circulating as such? And what would the survival of these texts look like?

On the circulation of vernacular texts in booklets, Pamela Robinson has argued for the ownership of small books in limp bindings, items that she terms *libelli*. Alexandra Gillespie has expanded upon Robinson's observations, arguing that larger texts, or groups of texts, could be similarly bound in this way and thus problematizes Robinson's definition of a 'booklet'.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps a more useful source on how this material was conceptualised are the Paston letters. As contemporaries of the readers of *Awntyrs*, their letters can provide insight into reading practices, as well as into the circulation of texts in this period. Evidence for the circulation of individual texts can certainly be found in the letters: John Paston's scribe, William Ebesham, writing in 1469 refers not only to Pastons' 'Grete Booke' but also to several other works that he has since completed, including a 'Litill booke of Pheesyk', and 'quairs of papers'.¹⁵¹ This demonstrates that contemporary commercial scribes were indeed producing texts in small books, or booklets, and were likewise conceptualising items in this way. It is in the same letter that Ebesham prices the

¹⁵⁰ Gillespie, 'Medieval Books', p. 2.

¹⁵¹ 'William Ebesham to Sir John Paston' (1469), *Paston Letters 1422-1509*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 5, item 695.

paper at ‘ij*d* a leff’.¹⁵² It can therefore be surmised that the ‘littill booke of Pheesyk’ was composed of just ten leaves of paper, having been priced at 20*d*.¹⁵³ There is some evidence too, of the Pastons themselves discussing the transmission of individual texts: in a letter dated 1472, John Paston writes ‘He [Earl of Arran] hath a book of my syster Annys of the *Sege of Thebes*; when he hathe doon with it, he promysyd to delyver it yow.’¹⁵⁴ This letter reveals not only the circulation of single-text items, but also details the ways in which texts were shared within social networks, with texts being borrowed and returned from the George Inn at Lombard Street in London.¹⁵⁵ A copy of *The Siege of Thebes* is found amongst the same group of booklets and by the same scribe of Oxford Douce 324, located in Rawlinson D.82. The Inventory of John Paston’s books records several items that are similar to those transmitted in Lambeth 491a and in the Oxford Douce 324 collection, including: ‘a Cronicle...to Edwarde the iij’; ‘a Boke of Troylus’; and crucially two vernacular Arthurian texts titled ‘off the Dethe of Arthur’ and ‘the Green Knyght’. The inventory also refers to several unbound items, described as being ‘in quyres’.¹⁵⁶ The Pastons were certainly a family of similar status to those detailed in this chapter with close ties to the city of London. It seems that they also shared a taste in literature, having owned and read many of the same, or similar, texts. The relative inexpensive status of these booklets and their vulnerable material form means that evidence of them having existed is as unlikely to survive as the booklets themselves.

The problem remains of what these booklets would have looked like had they survived. The closest contemporary example of a London-produced romance having survived as a booklet is that of the stanzaic poem *Le Morte Arthur*, which is bound in the

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid. It is worth noting that a copy of Friar Randolph’s *Treteese of Physik* is copied by Scribe A of the Oxford Douce 324 fragments into fols 1r-5v of London, BL, MS Sloane 3489.

¹⁵⁴ ‘John Paston to Sir John Paston’ (1472), *Paston Letters 1422-1509*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 5, item 85.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ ‘John Paston’s Books’, *Paston Letters 1422-1509*, ed. Gairdner, vol. 6, item 987.

later manuscript compiled by London mercer and bookseller, John Colyns.¹⁵⁷ London, BL, MS Harley 2252 is categorised as a commonplace book, compiled by Colyns in the early-sixteenth century, yet it contains two romances which Carol Meale has identified as ‘two independent booklets [produced] between 1460 and 1480’.¹⁵⁸ These are the poems *Ipomydon* in folios 54r-85v and the stanzaic *Morte Arthur* in folios 86r-133v.¹⁵⁹ Meale has carried out an extensive analysis of the book and from the palaeographic and paper stock evidence has persuasively argued for these booklets having been commercially produced in London in the same workshop.¹⁶⁰ Interestingly, some of the paper stocks found in the copy of *Ipomydon* are of the same stock found in some of the Paston letters, dated 1444-79 and in some of Caxton’s printed editions dating from the 1470s and 80s. Meale further observes that the griminess of the outer leaves of these booklets suggests that the two romances were unbound for some time before Colyns acquired them in or before 1517, according to his inscription on folio 133v at the end of the *Morte*.¹⁶¹ The stanzaic *Morte*, owned by the mercer and bookseller John Colyns, thus represents an example of the circulation of vernacular romance within late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century London. Surviving as it does perhaps as a condition of the particular professional interests of Colyns, the text still nevertheless demonstrates that a market of consumers for Arthurian romance existed amongst a London mercantile audience. Furthermore, its booklet format demonstrates a legitimate mode of both the text’s production and circulation. Its existence substantiates the arguments made in this chapter regarding the circulation of *Awntyrs* in the later Middle Ages and likewise represents a mode of transmission likely to suffer from large losses of material. Lastly, the assembling of these two fifteenth-century booklet

¹⁵⁷ *Le Morte Arthur*, DIMEV 3252; *Manual* 1.I.23.

¹⁵⁸ Meale, ‘Compiler at Work’, p. 83.

¹⁵⁹ *Ipomydon*, DIMEV 3462; *Manual* 1.I.102.

¹⁶⁰ I would question the assertion of a ‘workshop’, as manuscripts such as Oxford Douce 324 and its related booklets show a more adaptable method of commercial copying than is implied by the term ‘workshop’, with numerous scribes appearing to operate from different locations.

¹⁶¹ Meale, ‘Compiler at Work’, p. 83.

romances into his sixteenth-century commonplace book demonstrates the continued circulation of and demand for manuscripts during the early years of print. It is likely this demand, along with the market for Arthurian romance, which William Caxton exploits when printing Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* in 1485.

The production and circulation of the *Awntyrs* in booklet form is the one feature that all four surviving manuscripts share, suggesting that this may be the expected and typical material and literary form of Arthurian romance in the fifteenth century. By considering these texts as booklets, produced and circulated in this material form, more connections can be made between surviving texts than if these romances are considered only within their specific manuscript contexts. If we consider that the *Awntyrs* circulated as a booklet, as the material evidence strongly suggests, and place this in dialogue with other romance texts which were similarly circulating in booklets, which seems to be the case for a great many of the romances now compiled in large multi-text collections, the potential networks of circulation become much larger, and a more comprehensive picture of the texts' potential significance is formed. If someone like Thornton had before him a pile of booklets containing romance texts – not yet bound together – and someone within his social network, a friend or a family member wanted to borrow say, *Sir Isumbras*, they could be sent the booklet containing this poem, whilst, as we have seen, another friend, someone similar to the priest William Cuke, could be reading and even making a copy from Thornton's alliterative *Morte*. Both these individuals would also then have had access to the booklet of *Awntyrs* through this social relationship. Thus, the potential circulation of this text is expanded further. We can then read these texts compilationally, across compilations. When examining the *Awntyrs* situated within its bound manuscript, the

significance of this text appears limited (fig. 4.14), overshadowed by the texts that survive in a greater number of copies:¹⁶²

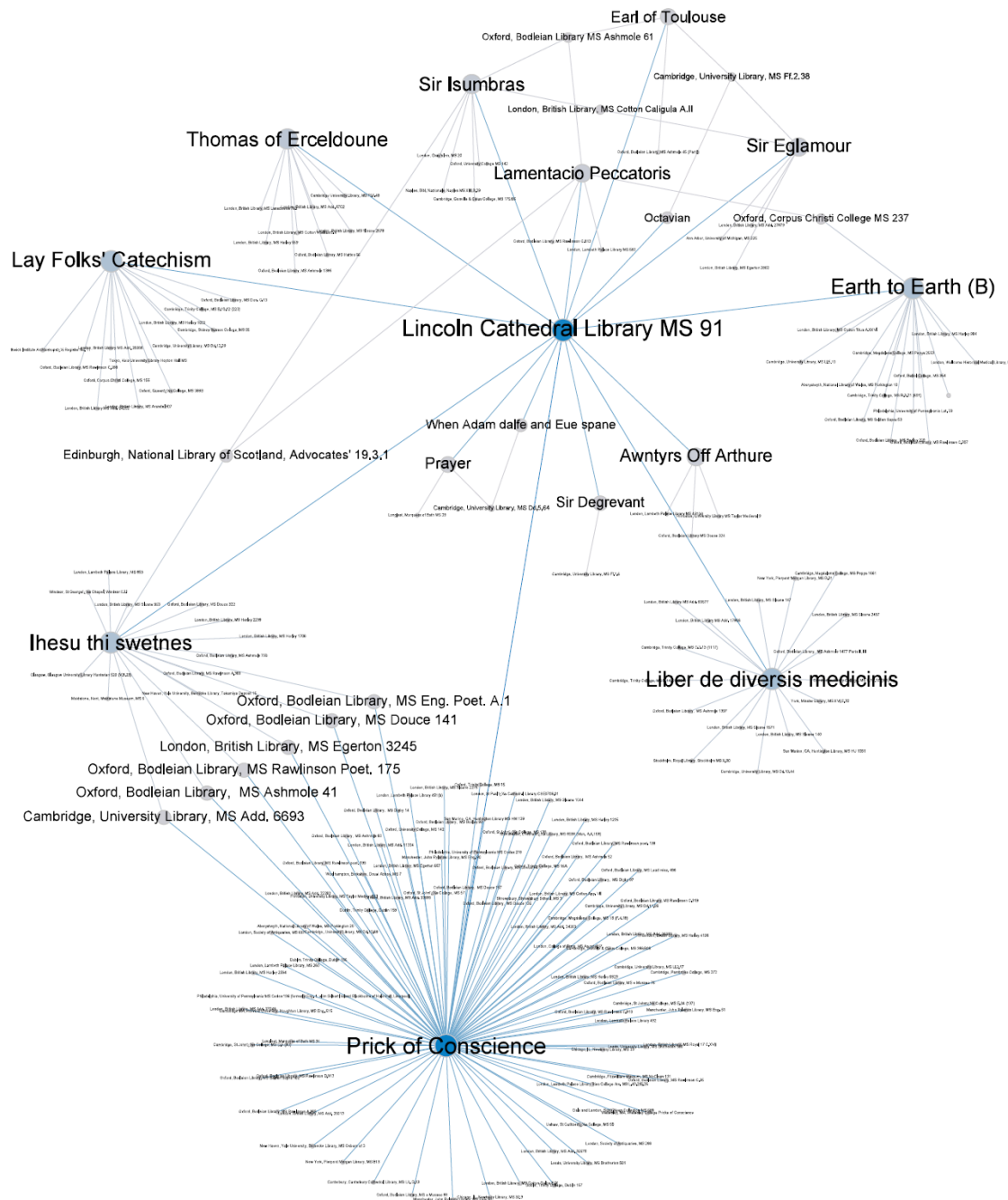


Figure 4.14: Constellation of Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91

¹⁶² Fig. 4.14 only shows some of the texts compiled within Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91, limited by the scale of the image. The choice of what to represent is my own, focusing on romance texts as well as popular devotional literature. See also Appendix G 'Related Manuscripts'.

However, if the perspective from which we consider the *Awntyrs* is altered, viewed instead as an independent cultural object, the manuscripts to which it can be potentially related increases significantly (fig. 4.15). This visualisation only shows things that can be directly related to the *Awntyrs* through material connections, first representing its four manuscript witnesses and the four scribes of these copies, visualised as primary connections, before showing the other manuscripts and texts to which the *Awntyrs* can be connected through these codices and their compilers. Of the nine large, multi-text Middle English Romance collections that survive from this period, all the manuscripts and the romances within them – save for the earlier fourteenth-century Auchinleck manuscript – exist in the *Awntyrs* constellation:

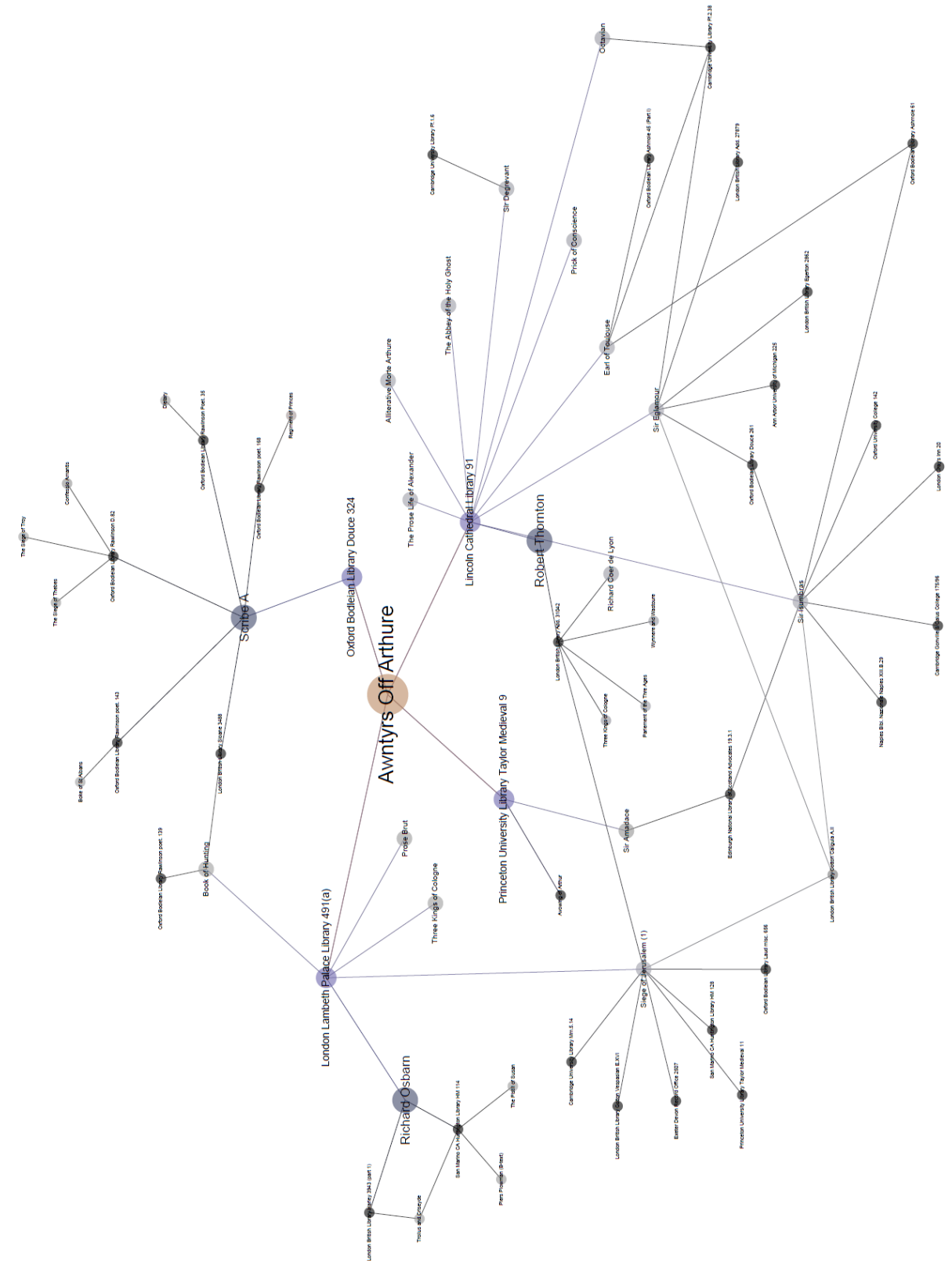


Figure 4.15: *The Awntyrs Constellation*

This is all hypothetical, but if we relate the material form of texts to their networks of circulation and imagine how they could have been used, we can broaden the potential contexts for their production and circulation. Not only does the constellation confront the

missing corpus, but it attempts to meaningfully incorporate the missing into the picture through a consideration of the now lost material instantiations of these texts – other people’s collections of booklets containing romance, which they may or may not have compiled and bound into a larger codex, which nevertheless failed to survive. Further work into the social networks of all these household romance manuscripts, if mapped and brought together, could yield important results that challenge current conceptions of how these romances were used and who used them, as well as extend our understanding of the networks through which these romances were circulated.

CONCLUSION A Collection of Communities

This study of the *Awntyrs* was only possible because of the extensive research that precedes it. Textual criticism was essential for establishing the corrupt textual tradition and therefore identifying that there were copies of the poem that have failed to survive. Research into the dialect and language of the *Awntyrs* and its various scribes enabled me to develop this project further, and I could engage with the missing corpus only because previous scholars had proved its existence. In Chapter 2, a comparison of the four extant copies of the *Awntyrs* established that there were at least three identifiable copies now lost: the holograph text, composed in Cumberland; a corrupted archetype from which all four surviving copies derived; and a copy which likely originated in the Derbyshire region, to which the later two texts are related, as further discussed in Chapter 4. This geographical and lexical spread is thus representative of the wide circulation *Awntyrs* enjoyed, reaching audiences in at least five counties of England: Cumberland, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, London and Essex. The poem can be further related to Scottish romances of the fifteenth century and it is highly likely that it was received by audiences in Scotland. If we accept that the Nevilles were the likely intended audience of the *Awntyrs*, their political interest in the border-region and the marriage of Jane Beaufort (Joan Neville's niece) to James I of Scotland would provide a potential mode of transmission for the poem into Scotland, suggesting that at least one other copy was circulating north of the border.

Multiple copies were also evidently circulating in London. As established in Chapter 4, the two texts produced in London are not textually related and yet they are found to be circulating in the same textual communities fifty years apart. This provides evidence that multiple copies must have at one time existed and that there remained a demand for the *Awntyrs* amongst this audience throughout the fifteenth century. This demand was substantial enough for the poem to be produced as part of a larger, collaborative commercial activity, alongside canonical texts including the works of

Chaucer, Gower, Langland and Hoccleve. The audiences for these well-known and widely circulated texts are conceptualised very differently to the “provincial gentry household” that is typically affiliated with the *Awntyrs* and other fifteenth-century metrical romances. The significance of the London context for the *Awntyrs* should not then be understated; the existence of the poem in this space, affiliated with the livery companies of London, reframes our understanding of who engaged with the *Awntyrs* and extends the potential popularity of the poem to a new audience of civic elite, trading in London, buying property in Essex and engaging with alliterative Arthurian romance. I suspect that the number of London-produced texts that have failed to survive is far higher than has previously been imagined, with a conservative estimate of dozens of missing copies of the *Awntyrs*.

The networks shown to be engaging with the *Awntyrs* connect this poem to a large and vibrant literary culture, with its scribes having access to multiple texts from diverse sources. This is as true of Thornton and the scribe of Princeton Taylor 9 as it is for the scribes of the London manuscripts, whose exemplars reflect dialects from across counties and whose activities would require them to travel beyond the vicinity of their household. Cultural objects do not acknowledge socio-economic boundaries and frequently transgress them, thus analysing the networks that can be constructed from the material text shows a more nuanced, three-dimensional view of late-medieval society that does not need to consider any sub-culture’s interaction with literature as subsidiary to another, but rather maps the spontaneous ways that cultural objects, including fifteenth-century romances, are shared. To reiterate the words of Bruno Latour quoted in this thesis’s introduction: ‘Interest arises impromptu. And it attaches *people* and *things*, more or less passionately [...] it arises *between* two entities that do not know, before it arises, that they could be attached to each other.’¹ The *Awntyrs* was more able to be shared in this way because of its material form.

¹ Latour, *Modes of Existence*, p. 429.

All four extant versions of the *Awntyrs* were used as a booklet, in each case a small gathering of quires that existed as an independent unit of text. Each of the four surviving copies, at one stage of their process, were also intentionally kept: Oxford Douce 324 potentially remained as a stationer's stock, likely seeing little active engagement, hence it has survived relatively well. Lambeth 491a, Lincoln 91 and Princeton Taylor 9 were all later bound with other texts in acts of preservation, fundamentally changing their use and making them, thankfully, more likely to survive. Princeton Taylor 9 perhaps best represents the way most people engaged with the *Awntyrs*, still surviving as a small booklet of Arthurian romance. This version of the poem was able to survive because of the durability of parchment compared to paper booklets, which appears to be the preferred media for romance texts in the fifteenth century. An examination of the codicological details supports a type of "hard use", the survival of the *Awntyrs* as just singletons in Lincoln 91 an example of the impact this kind of use could have on a text if it were not so carefully repaired and preserved by its owners. The *Awntyrs* is then an ephemeral cultural object, more vulnerable to damage than other late-medieval texts. The existence of other contemporary texts in this form is substantiated by evidence from other manuscripts, as well as medieval letters and inventories which record single-text, unbound items being used and owned by readers. From the research I have carried out into the material survival of the *Awntyrs* I would argue that Arthurian romance was almost certainly intended to be used in booklet form, with the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, the stanzaic *Morte Arthure*, the *Awntyrs off Arthure*, *Sir Percevalle de Galles* and the *Avowyng of Arthure* all surviving as booklets. I suspect this is also the case for other contemporary romances, certainly circulating in textual nodes if not independently. Further similar studies to that presented here would therefore be valuable, since the recognition of the booklet as the principal material and literary form in which romances were *used* has significant implications for

how we understand the poor survival of these texts in comparison to other contemporary literature.

The central question of this thesis was two-fold: firstly, how did medieval audiences use their texts to result in so few extant copies? And secondly, can the non-extant copies be critically discussed to make a meaningful argument of their absence? I feel confident that an examination of the *Awntyrs* has satisfied both parts of this question, at least in relation to this specific poem. To argue for absence as evidence is never an easy task. However, in recognising the material form of the *Awntyrs* and identifying its reception contexts, this becomes possible. Even more so when we relate manuscript practice to that of early-print culture. The latest surviving copy of the *Awntyrs* is also the most commercial copy, representing a formal, organised and collaborative commercial enterprise. This booklet is contemporary to the earliest printed texts, produced in the same contexts as works by Caxton in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. In comparing the survival of the *Awntyrs* to that of early-printed text, the high rate of manuscript loss is easier to substantiate. For example, Caxton's *Le Morte Darthur* printed in London in 1485 had a print run of as many as 500 copies, yet only two fragments survive.² As argued in Chapters 3 and 4, this Arthurian text is participating in an already established literary culture, appealing to pre-existing markets of readers of Arthuriana in the city and beyond. This is the same audience as the *Awntyrs*; the copies produced from the commercial scribe of Oxford Douce 324 still likely to be in active circulation at the time of Caxton's production of *Le Morte Darthur*.

This study has revealed a diverse audience of reader/listeners engaging with the *Awntyrs*, beyond that represented by its surviving copies. In Chapter 3, I argued that the implied, intended and actual audience of the *Awntyrs* was most likely to be female.

² Lotte Hellinga, as quoted in Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory*, p. 8, fn. 24.

Caxton's *Blanchardine and Eglantine*, which like *Le Morte Darthur* survives in just two fragments, reveals women to be active participants in literary culture, not just as consumers of romance, but also having influence on the market of late-medieval literary texts. I would argue that this is similarly present in earlier manuscript culture, extensive evidence for women reading romance presented in Chapter 3, which builds on an already large (and growing) body of research into women's textual activities. An analysis of the literary communities of the *Awntyrs* provides a glimpse into the many ways a text could function for its audiences, revealing how romance was potentially engaged with and in turn contributing to and reinforcing arguments for women's active engagement in literary culture. Medieval poets identify women as readers of romance in metatextual moments that reveal women reading, listening, and speaking romance, collectively engaging with text. Women are presented within romance as storytellers, intercessors and serve to drive narrative action forward as active participants in the texts they read. Evidence of women owning romance texts may be sparse, but romance texts themselves survive so haphazardly that this alone is not enough to discount women as significant consumers of Middle English poetry. Where evidence does survive, it is compelling, and when networks of women owning romance are connected to literary readings of how women are presented within poetry, whether as fictional or implied reader/listeners, the evidence is more compelling still. I believe that more research into the activities of medieval women would only continue to demonstrate women's active participation in textual communities. Indeed, the most tangible example of women's collective engagement with text is presented by the Findern manuscript. What is most exciting about the women represented in CUL Ff.1.6 is that there is nothing to suggest that any of the men or women interacting with this codex consider the women's activity as unusual.

That the Findern manuscript shares material with a book to which the *Awntyrs* belongs is hardly surprising to the scholar who researches late-medieval romance texts, the

majority of which survive in just nine large multi-text compilations; both Lincoln 91 and CUL Ff.1.6 belonging to this corpus.³ In the appendices is a list of manuscripts which also relate to the *Awntyrs*. When I embarked on this project I hoped to be able to discuss the ways in which the booklet of the *Awntyrs* related to many other booklets of text, connecting the social, historical networks to the surviving material record to show what literature various scribes, compilers and readers may have had access to in a larger constellation of related literature. However, the complex ways in which these codices are related proved to be too large to incorporate into this thesis, expanding far beyond what I had imagined. Such research has the potential to show us the vibrant literary culture of late-medieval Britain, able to more closely relate manuscripts such as the Findern Anthology and the books scribed by Thornton, as well as connect the people who interacted with them. It further has the potential to reveal codices that may have once existed, allowing us to metaphorically construct compilations of texts and to meaningfully interpret them without forsaking their materiality.

³ CUL, MS Ff.2.38; Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 175; Edinburgh, NLS, MS Advocates 19.2.1 (the Auchinleck MS); Edinburgh, NLS, MS Advocates 19.3.1 (the Heege MS); Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91 and London, BL, MS Additional 31042 (the Thornton MSS); London, BL, MS Cotton Caligula a.2; London, BL, MS Egerton 2862; and Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61.

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APPENDIX A: Table 2.1: The four manuscripts of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*

MS	LONDON, LAMBETH PALACE LIBRARY, MS 491a	LINCOLN, CATHEDRAL LIBRARY, MS 91	PRINCETON, UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, MS TAYLOR 9	OXFORD, BODLEIAN LIBRARY, MS DOUCE 324
DATE / LOCATION	c. 1425-35, London	c. 1430-50, Yorkshire,	c. 1450-75, Lancashire	c. 1460-80, London
DIALECT	Essex, LP: 630, <i>LALME</i>	Yorkshire (N. Riding), LP: 1.98, <i>LALME</i>	Lancashire, LP: 25, <i>LALME</i>	Derbyshire, LP: 320, <i>LALME</i>
SCRIBE	Unknown, likely a clerk connected to the Guildhall	Robert Thornton	Unknown	Unknown, potentially a professional scribe
LOCATION IN MS	275r-86v	154r-61r	1r-15v	1r-11v
MATERIAL	Paper and Parchment	Paper	Parchment	Paper
FOLIO SIZE	225 x 146 mm	292 x 209 mm	113 x 64 mm	295 x 203 mm
NUMBER OF LINES	707 (avg.31 lines per page)	593 (avg. 40 lines per page) *Lacking approx. 106 lines ¹	690 (avg. 24 lines per page)	713 (avg. 32 lines per page)

¹ Based on fol.159 lacking its lower third, with a lacuna of 1 folio directly following. Taken with the average of 40 lines per page, this calculates the loss of text at 106 lines, which would make the complete, undamaged text 699 lines. See appendix C for a collation of this manuscript.

TITLE		<p><i>Here Bygynne The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelan[e]</i></p> <p>Written in red ink in Thornton's hand, along the top margin of fol. 154r</p>		
INITIAL(S)	<p>1. 2-line opening initial "I" in blue and red ink (folio 275r)</p>	<p>1. 13-line opening initial "I" in black and green ink (folio 154r)</p> <p>2. 4-line initial "T" in red ink (folio 158r)</p>	<p>1. 3-line opening initial "[I]?" blank or damaged (undiscernible) (folio 1r)</p> <p>2. 2-line initial "H" indicated by guide letter, initial not executed (folio 6v)</p> <p>3. 2-line initial "T" indicated by guide letter, initial not executed (folio 11v)</p>	<p>1. 4-line opening initial "I" in blue and red ink (folio 1r)</p> <p>2. 2-line initial "T" in blue ink (folio 6r)</p> <p>3. 2-line initial "G" in blue ink (folio 8v)</p>
TEXT DIVISION(S)		<p>1. <i>The knyghte in his colours was armed ful clene</i> (Gates 378) Beginning of the description of Sir Galeron fully armed, before battle with Sir Gawain.</p>	<p>1. <i>"How shal we fare," quod þe freke, "þat fondene to fighte"</i> (Gates 261) Gawain's conversation with the Ghost and the prophecy of Arthur's fall.</p> <p>2. <i>Gawayne was gaily graped in grene</i> (Gates 508) Beginning of the battle between Sir Gawain and Sir Galeron.</p>	<p>1. <i>The king to souper is set, [and] serued in [sale]</i> (Gates 339) Beginning of the feast following the hunt, opening with description of the king seated.</p> <p>2. <i>Gawayne was gaily graped in grene</i> (Gates 508) Beginning of the battle between Sir Gawain and Sir Galeron following the description of both knights in their armour.</p>

RUBRICATION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stanza marks in the left margin of the text; alternating red and blue every 1st, 5th and 10th line of the 13-line stanza, until line 235 (folio 278v) 2. Stanza marks in the left margin of the text; alternating red and blue every 13 lines to mark the beginning of each stanza, until line 391 (folio 281v) 3. Rhyme brackets in black ink on 4-short lines of each stanza (folio 275r only) 4. Dashes to mark last 4 lines of each stanza in red or blue ink, folios 278v-281r only. 			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stanza marks in the left margin of the text in red ink, marking the opening line of each 13-line stanza, throughout entire text. 2. Red-ink rhyme brackets on the 4-short lines of each stanza, throughout entire text.
INSCRIPTION(S)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Explicit" black ink, in the scribe's hand, bottom margin (folio 286v) 2. "Thes Booke" inserted between end of text and "Explicit" in a later hand, black ink. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Explicit" black ink, in Thornton's hand, written twice, with decorative dragon over second explicit. Halfway down folio (folio 161r) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "a fyte", written in black ink, aligned to the right of line 260 (folio 6v) 2. "a fyte", written in black ink, aligned to the right of line 507 (folio 11v) 3. "ffinis" written in black ink, aligned to the right of the last line (folio 15v) 	

APPENDIX B: London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a

London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491a is half of a two-part codex, the second half containing miscellaneous religious texts in a different hand: see M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 683-84. The following information relates only to the first part of the codex, 491a.

DATE: c. 1425-35

PLACE OF PRODUCTION: London

SCRIBE: (?) clerk of the Guildhall, written in *anglicana* script. Scribal Dialect located to Essex, Grid 578 190 *LALME* LP 6030, composite profile based on an analysis of London, BL, MS Harley 3943 and San Marino California, Huntington Library, MS HM 114. For other manuscripts produced by this scribe see Appendix G.

BINDING: 234 x 170mm spine in gold lettering reads: BRUT IN ENGLISH POEMS / COD LAMBETH 491a

MS: ii + 290 mixed vellum and paper + iv + 35 paper (all flyleaves modern)

LEAF SIZE: 222 x 143 mm; WRITING SPACE: 170 x 88 mm

LAYOUT: evidence of ruling in brown crayon, all texts written in a single column, with use of blue and red ink variously throughout the text.

FOLIATION/PAGINATION: modern pencil pagination, beginning *1* in top right margin
Folio 1r is vellum and features BIBLIOTHECA LAMBETHANA stamped in bottom margin.

DAMAGE: Significant losses to beginning and end of MS. For further description of damage see below.

ITEMS:

1. The Prose *Brut*: *IPMEP* 374, *Manual* 8.XXI.10; fols 1r-205v

Starts imperfectly: *The qwene anone toke gold and sylvir grete plente and toke hit to (th)e sqwer in connsel yat he shold go and bere it to her fadyr ad*

Red-ink headings throughout, with use of two-line initials in red and blue ink; place names and proper names underlined with red ink; marginal red-ink notations to identify sections of text, i.e. *The berth of Cryst* or the date, i.e. *xxiii rex*; top, right-

hand margin of recto features number referencing system in black ink, i.e. 2.2, 2.3, etc. from folio 2r until 16.9, fol.205r; quire signatures evident on several rectos in the bottom-right hand margin in black ink; likewise, catchwords frequently evident, as on versos 46, 62, 88, 96, 110, 123, 139, 133, 168, 184, and 200; damage to the text evident on fols 57, 90, 91, 146, 152, 196, 201, most of damage result of removing margins of the text, several more folios have been cut with no damage to the text; some marginal annotations, including some crudely drawn images of birds and basic geometric shapes in brown crayon.

Explicit quidam tractat/Rugius de gestis Kngley/Brute vulgarit mi(n)cupatus

2. *The Siege of Jerusalem: DIMEV 2651, Manual 1.I.107; fols 206r-227v*

Red-ink incipit: *here bygynnith (th)e sege of Jer(usa)l(e)m*; red-ink title continues across top of verso/recto throughout entire poem, i.e. *(th)e sege* on the verso and *of jer[usa]l[e]m* on the recto; text begins with two-line blue-ink initial with red-ink embellishment of 25 lines; first folio is of paper; text begins: *In tyberes tyme the trewe Emporor/ Syr Cesar hym sef sesid in Rome*; following fol.1 the copy is much messier, slanted, no initials, though scribe has used red and blue ink paragraph markers; one quire signature, fol. 222r; one catchword fol. 216v; damage to text on fols 216-19 from cutting of the margins.

Explicit written in black-ink, title of text written in red-ink: *(th)e sege of Jer[usa]l[e]m*.

3. *The Three Kings of Cologne: IPMEP 290; fols 228r-274v*

Red-ink title reads: *A tretys of (th)e thre kynges of Cologne*; red ink title runs across verso/recto in the same way as preceding text, i.e. *Thre kynges* on verso *of Cologne* on recto; first folio is on paper, begins with a two-line blue-ink initial: *Whan al the world was distredid of Cesar/August as is seyde in (th)e gospell Exunt edutu*; some rubrication in red-ink; several 2-line blue and red ink initials; quire signatures used consistently throughout; catchwords evident on fols 232, 246, and 262; damage to the text on opening folio of text, fol. 228, lacking lower half; marginal text on fols 248v, 253r, 258v, 259v, 260v, 263r, 265r; text ends imperfectly on fol. 274v; no *explicit*.

4. *The Awntyrs of Arthure: DIMEV 2628; fols 275r-286v*

Text begins on new recto on parchment, very worn; text begins with no title, but two-line blue-ink initial: *In the tyme of Arthur an aunter bytid/In talkyng of his turmentis [th]e tales hy tellis*; use of black-ink rhyme brackets on fol. 275r only and alternating blue and red-ink stanza marks in the left margin of the text every 1st, 5th

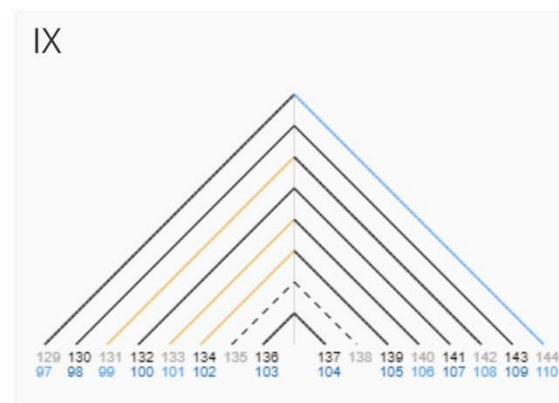
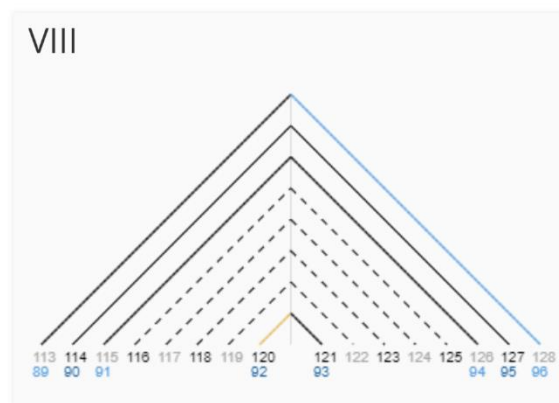
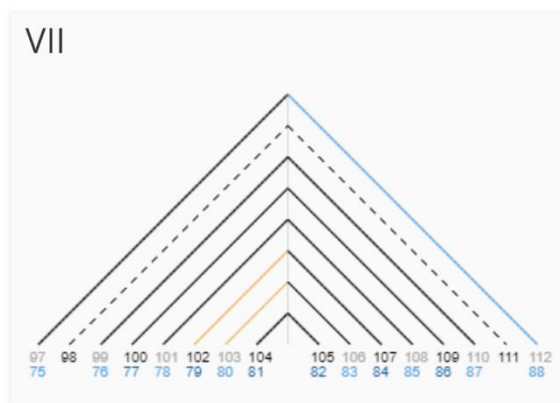
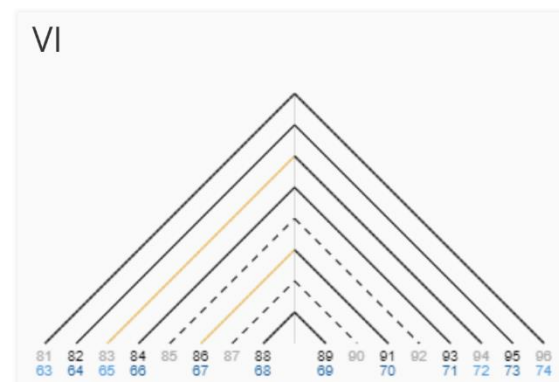
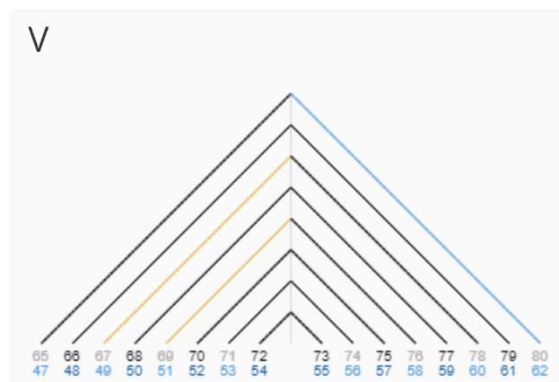
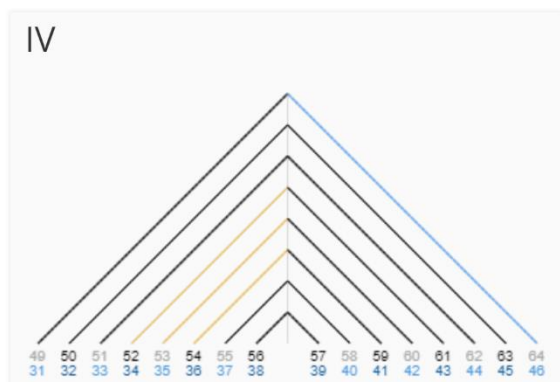
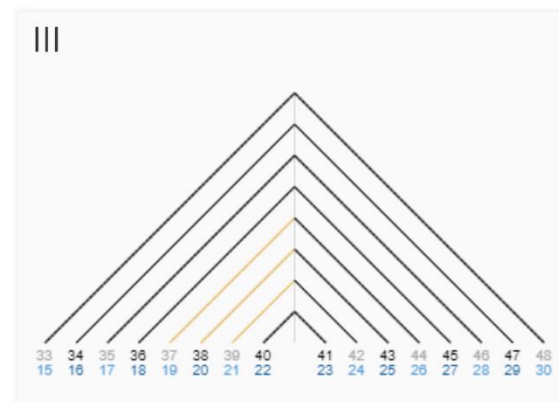
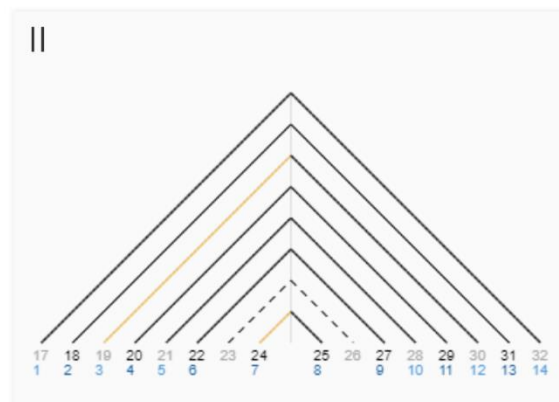
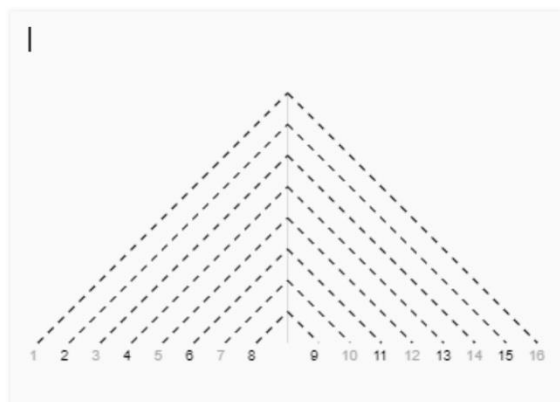
and 10th line of the 13-line stanza, until fol. 278v changes to every 13 lines to mark the beginning of each stanza and alternating blue and red-ink dashes to mark shorter verse lines, until fol. 281v, after which there is no more rubrication; change in quire signature system, beginning of new alphabet, fol. 284r 'Aii'; damage to text at fol. 276, last four lines of text lacking; some marginal notes on fol. 282v; *Explicit* in black ink, no title.

5. *The Book of Hunting*: DIMEV 6507; fols 287r-290v

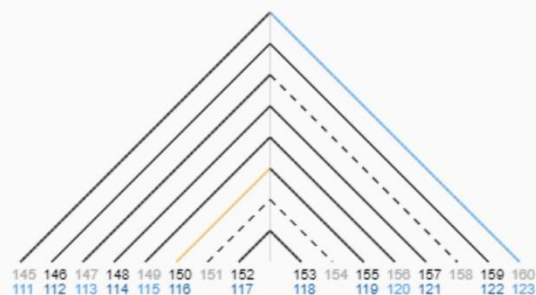
No title or *incipit*; text begins on paper, with two-line blue-ink initial with red-ink detail; *My deresone wher fore fare by frith or by fell / Takth good heed how Trystyam wold tell*; red-ink rhyme brackets to highlight the couplets of six long and two short lines; alternating blue and red-ink stanza marks on fol. 287r but not continued through rest of text, though rhyme brackets are used consistently throughout; no quire signatures discernable; one catchword on fol. 290v; margins have been cut, but with no damage to the text; text ends imperfectly.

COLLATION: 22 quires totalling at least 336 original folios. The first twenty quires regular quires of sixteen folios on mixed parchment and paper, the final two quires being of eight leaves each, also mixed media. Manuscript lacking at least forty-six folios, with one quire of sixteen folios lacking from the beginning of the codex; the final text also ends imperfectly with unsubstantiated numbers of folios missing from the end of the codex:

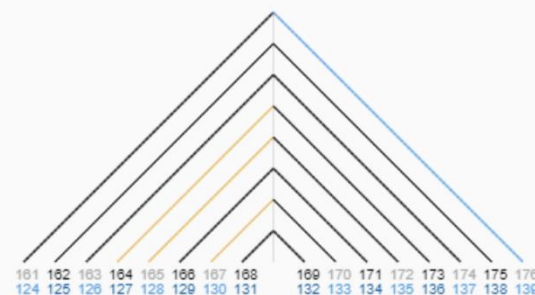
[A 16 (MISSING)], B 16 (fols 1-14; wants fols 7,10); C–E 16 (fols 15-62); F 16 (fols 63-74; wants fols 5,7,10,12); G 16 (fols 75-88; wants fols 2, 15); H 16 (fols 89-96; wants fols 4–7, 10–13); I 16 (fols 97-110; wants fols 7, 10); J 16 (fols 111-123; wants fols 7, 10, 14); K 16 (fols 124-139); L 16 (fols 140-153; wants fols 7, 10); M 16 (fols 154-168; wants fol. 9); N–Q 16 (fols 169-232); R 16 (fols 233-246; wants fols 2, 15); S 16 (fols 247-262); T 16 (fols 263-274; wants fols 3, 14–16); U 8 (fols 275-282); V 8 (fols 283-290); [W? MISSING]



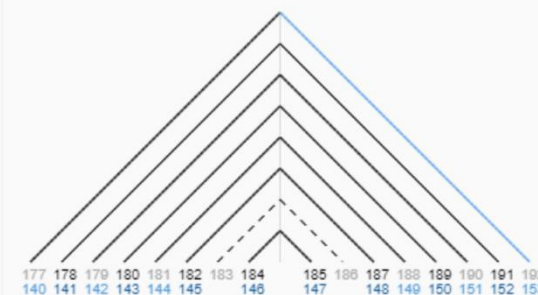
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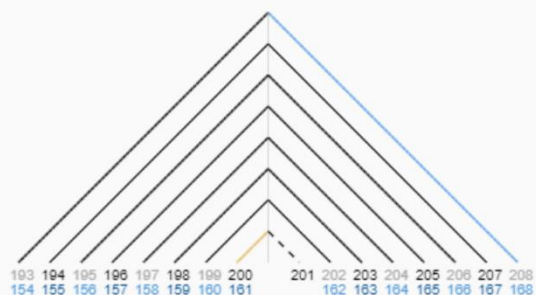
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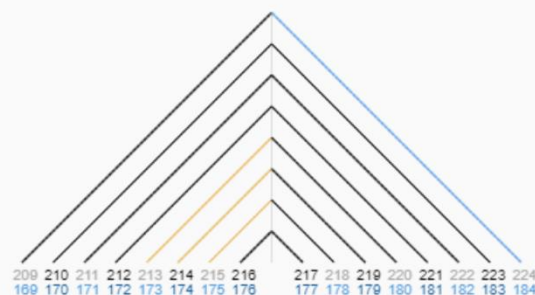
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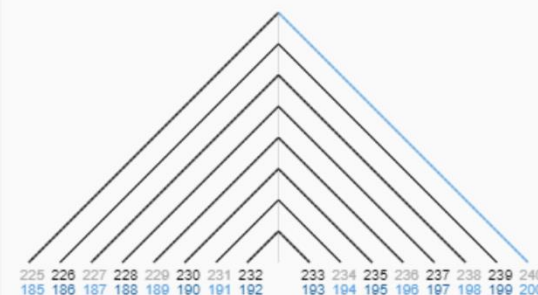
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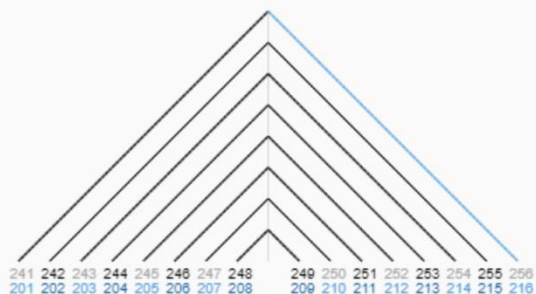
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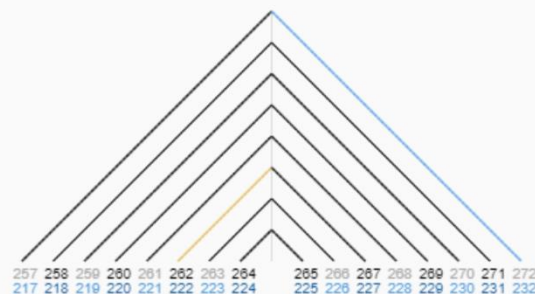
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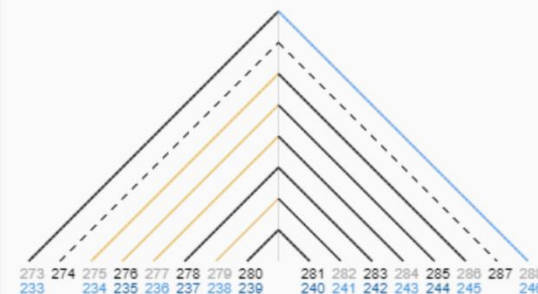
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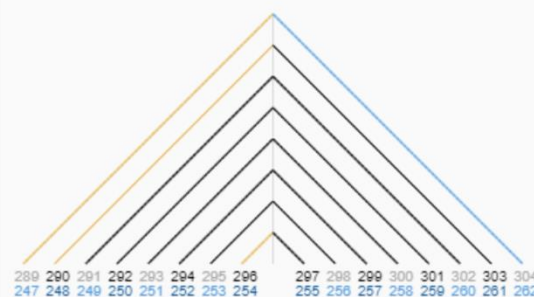
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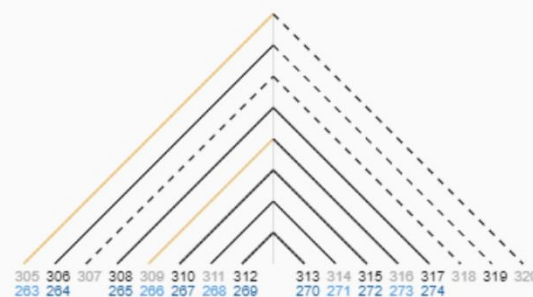
XVIII



XIX



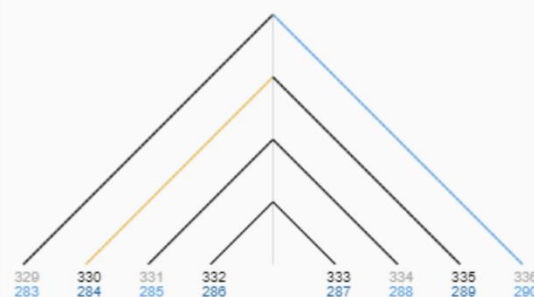
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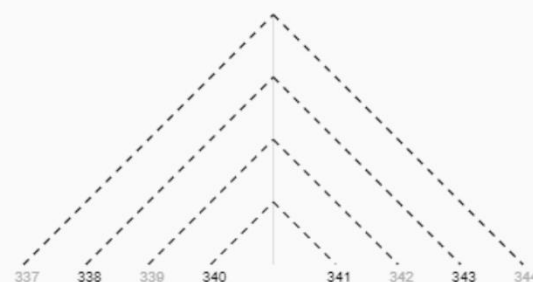
XXI



XXII



XXIII



Key

Extant

Missing

Cancelled

Signature

Catchword

APPENDIX C: Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91

Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91 is one of two manuscripts copied by the scribe Robert Thornton, the other being London, BL, MS Additional 31042. For a description of this manuscript see John J. Thompson, *Robert Thornton and the London Thornton Manuscript: British Library MS Additional 31042* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987) and Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston, eds, *Robert Thornton and His Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2014).

For other descriptions of Lincoln MS 91 see Rodney M. Thomson, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 65-69 and D. S. Brewer and A. E. B. Owen eds, *The Thornton Manuscript (Lincoln Cathedral MS. 91)* (London: Scholar Press, 1978), as well as the volume edited by Fein and Johnston cited above. Below is a brief description of Lincoln MS 91, focusing on the *Awntyrs*.

DATE: c. 1430-50

PLACE OF PRODUCTION: Yorkshire, North Riding

SCRIBE: Robert Thornton (d. 1465?), written in *anglicana* script. Dialect LP 1.98 *LALME*, located to North Riding of Yorkshire through the identification of the scribe's hand and location.

BINDING: ms. was rebound in oak boards with white leather spine in 1975 following the restoration by Sydney M. Cockerell. The spine reads THE THORNTON ROMANCES in gold lettering. What is thought to be the original fifteenth-century binding was described by Frederic Maddern of the British Library before he had it rebound in 1839, described as 'thick oaken boards, covered with white leather, and fastened with a clasp'.

MS: during conservation the surviving 323 folios were mounted onto modern paper. The ms. was likely at least 360 folios originally, with heavy damage sustained, the final text of the ms. heavily fragmented.

PAPER STOCKS: Various paper stocks used, see: Sarah M. Horrall, 'The Watermarks of the Thornton Manuscripts', *Notes and Queries*, 27.5 (1980), 385-86 and Thompson, 'Appendix: The Watermarks in Thornton's Collection', *Robert Thornton and the London Thornton Manuscript*.

LEAF SIZE: 292 x 209mm

LAYOUT: no ruled lines, but is evidence of a ruled frame, using same brownish ink in which the text is written. No rubrication in text, though titles frequently feature across the

top of the opening folio, as on fol. 154r. Use of alphabetised quire signatures appear frequently, similarly catchwords are used, as represented in the below collation diagram.

DECORATION: various styles of illustration appear in the manuscript, some initials carried out using black outlined letter with pale red and green ink decoration, often floral. Also used are red-ink initials with lilac foliage decoration. Some initials feature faces or other images. Fols 52v-98v more heavily illustrated than the remainder of the ms., featuring several drawings in the margin which relate to the text of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.

FOLIATION/PAGINATION: modern foliation in top right-hand of each recto, Owen dates it to the last binding in 1832.¹

DAMAGE: significant damage, lacking folios represented in the collation below; most of damage occurs to outer folios of quires, suggesting they remained unbound for some time; quire I which contains the *Awntyrs* features damage to the centre of the quire, supporting the theory that this quire was reorganized by Thornton after the damage had occurred, as discussed in Chapter 4.3. *Awntyrs* is lacking the lower half of fol. 159, with a lacuna of 1 leaf directly following, resulting in a loss of approximately 160 lines.

ITEMS: MS contains 65 texts according to Owen and Brewer and 100 items according to Fein and Johnston who itemize the inscriptions of Thornton.² For a full list of items see Fein and Johnston. Below are the items featured in Booklet II, pertinent to this thesis:

BOOKLET II (fols 53-179) (Items 8-36 in Fein and Johnston):

1. Alliterative *Morte Arthure*: DIMEV 3745, *Manual* 1.I.16; fols 53r-98v

Red-ink title across top margin of fol. 53r ‘So begynnes Morte Arthure’; four-line red-ink initial opens the text, presented in one column; three-line red-ink initials used elsewhere in the text. Robert Thornton’s name appears in red ink in the bottom margin. Illustrations appear in the left margins of animal, human and marvellous figures, as well as in the initial spaces, all in brown ink; *Explicit* directly follows last line of text, followed by an inscription written by Thornton which reads ‘‘R Thornton dictus q[ui] scripsit sit b[e]n[e]dict[us] ame[n]’ folio 98v.

Unique copy.

2. *Octavian*: DIMEV 3132, *Manual* 1.I.81; fols 98v-109r

¹ Brewer and Owen, *The Thornton Manuscript*, p. xiii.

² Brewer and Owen, *The Thornton Manuscript*, pp. viii-xi; *Robert Thornton and His Books*, ed. by Fein and Johnston, pp. 21-60.

Black-ink title in centre of folio 'here begynnes the romaunce off Octavyane' two-thirds down the page following the end of the alliterative *Morte*. Text written in two columns, starting with four-line red-ink initial with three-line red-ink initials used elsewhere. Text heavily damaged.

3. *Sir Isumbras*: DIMEV 1934, *Manual* 1.I.78; fols 109r-14v

Text begins at the end of the right-hand column in bottom of fol. 109r, with six-line initial using green, red and black ink initial, decorated with flora. Title introduces the text in black ink 'Here begynnes the Romance Off S[ir] ysambrace';

4. *The Earl of Toulouse*: DIMEV 2813, *Manual* 1.I.94; fols 114v-22r

Romance begins in top right-hand column of fol. 114v, with the title 'Here byggnes ye Romance off Dyke, the Emp[err][our] and the Erle Berade of Tholous and of the Emprus Beaulilione' with a red-ink four line initial, as the previous romances, the text is presented in two-column format. Heavily fragmented on fol. 112v.

5. *Life of Saint Christopher*: DIMEV 3264, *Manual* 2.V.59(c); fols 112v-29v

Opening folio heavily fragmented, text opening survives, written in the right-hand column two-thirds down fol. 112v. Text is begun with Latin red-ink title 'Vita S[an]ct[i] Xr[isto]pofori', following which is four lines of red text in English, followed by five-line red-ink initial and the text in black ink. Following folio also heavily fragmented, much of the text is lost.

6. *Sir Degrevant*: DIMEV 3197, *Manual* 1.I.97; fols 130r-39v

Text is heavily damaged, with two hundred lines lacking. The *explicit* for the poem appears at the top of fol.139v.

7. *Sir Eglamour of Artois*: DIMEV 2867, *Manual* 1.I.79; fols 139v-47r

Text begins in left-hand column with black-ink title 'Incipit S[ir] Eglamo[ur] of Artasse'; text opens with a six-line red-ink initial. Black-ink rhyme brackets are used. Text is damaged on fol. 144.

8. *The Wicked Knight and the Friar*: DIMEV 2864, *Manual* 9.XXIV.186; fols 147r-48r

Title: 'De Miraculo Beate Marie', heavily damaged lacking one folio following fol. 147, which is also severely damaged. Written in double-column format. Unique to this MS.

9. *Lyarde*: DIMEV 3304; fols 148r-49r

Written in single columns, even though the page is ruled for double columns. Opens with title 'Lyarde' which is also the opening word of the poem. Poem ends 'here endys Lyarde' with no text directly following. Unique to this MS.

10. *Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy*: DIMEV 620, *Manual* 5.XIII.290; fols 149v-53v

Written in double-column format, with heavy losses to the text, fol. 152 lacking its lower half, fol. 153 only a fragment (about ¼ fol. survives). Text ends with *explicit*: 'Explicit Thomas Of Erseldowu[o]n' in the right-hand column, half-way down fragmented folio.

11. *The Awntyrs off Arthure*: DIMEV 2628, *Manual* 1.I.30; fols 154r-61r

Title written across top margin of folio 'Here Bygynnes The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyn[e]'; opening initial of thirteen lines in black, red and green ink, with flora decoration, similar to the initial used for *Sir Isumbras*. Fols 154-58 all have been torn along lower half and evidence that fragmented folios have been sewn back together, with folio 159 missing its lower half and a folio lacking immediately following. Text presented without stanza divisions until fol. 156r where scribe uses rhyme brackets in brown ink (same as text) to indicate wheel of stanza, with the last line of the verse aligned to the right of the other three shorter verse lines. Four red-ink initial on folio 158 marks the only visual division of the text. Text ends with the word 'Explicit' written twice, followed by the word 'libere'; the second *explicit* has a grotesque animal drawn over it.

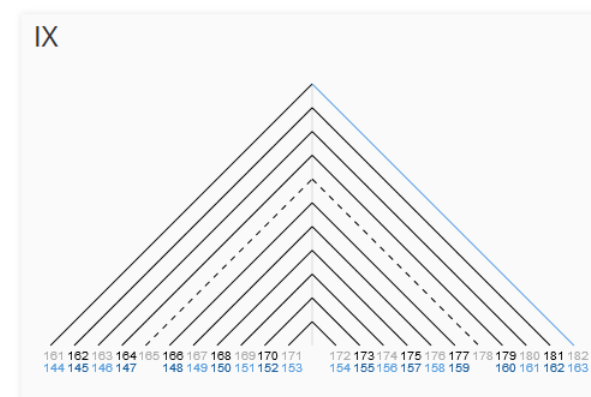
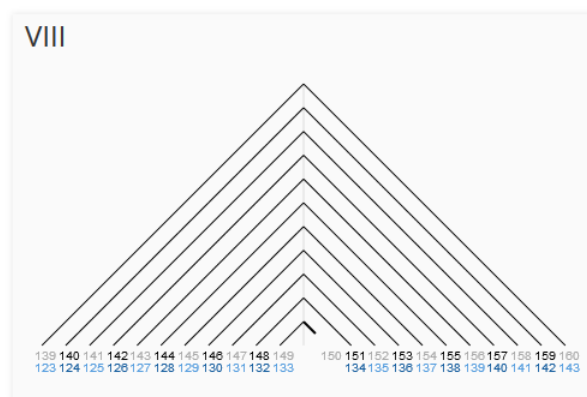
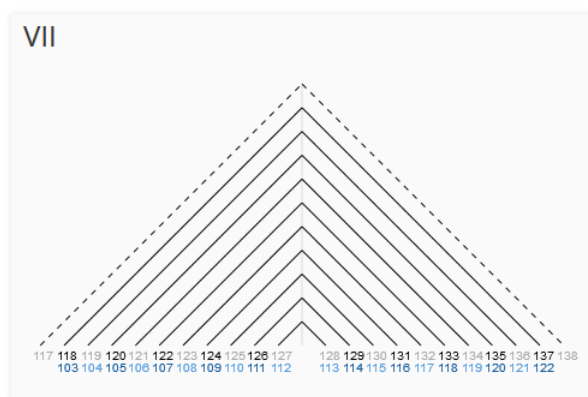
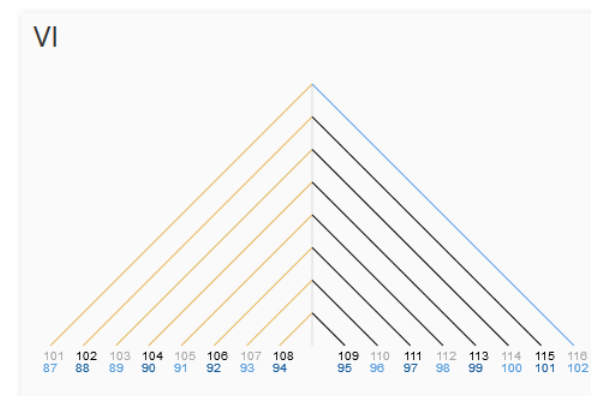
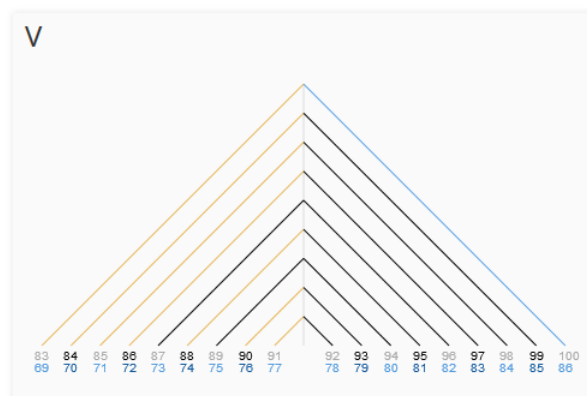
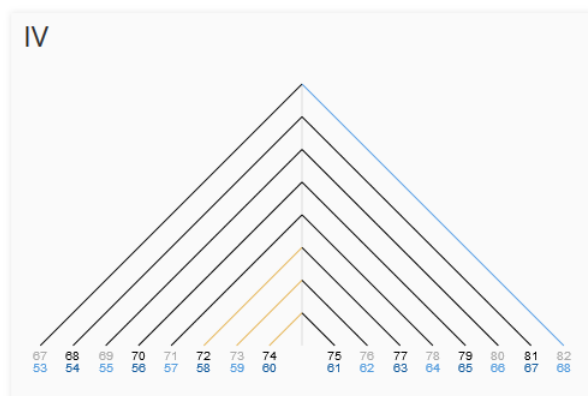
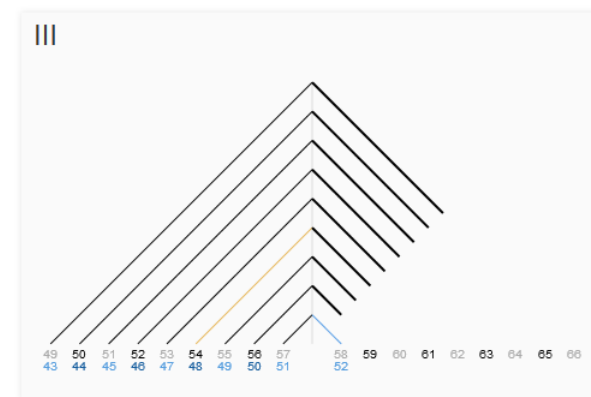
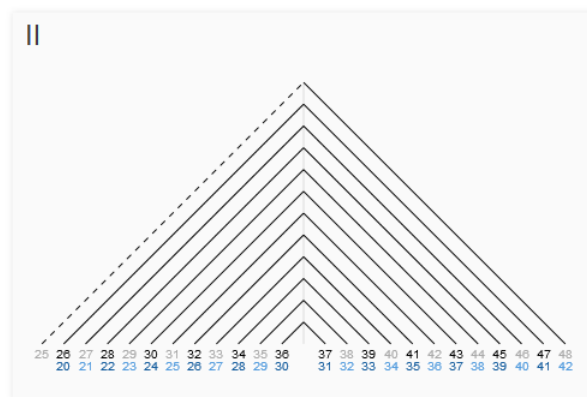
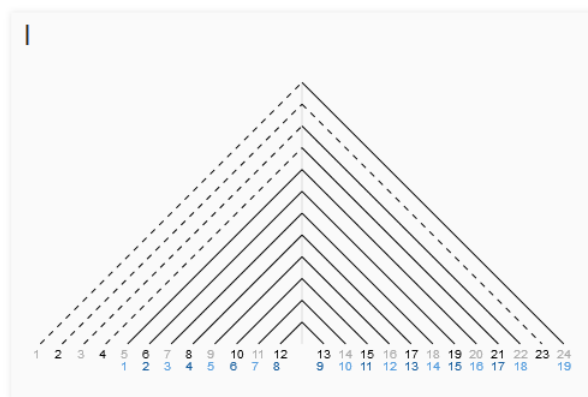
12. *Sir Perceval of Gales*: DIMEV 3074, *Manual* 1.I.39; fols 161r-76r

Title written across the centre of the folio 'Here Bygynnes The Romance Off S[ir] Percyuell[e] of Gales'; text written in double-column format, evidence of pricked frame ruling; opens with four-line red-ink initial, brown-ink rhyme brackets used. Another four-line red-ink initial appears on folio 164. Text ends at the bottom of the left-hand column of fol. 176r, with the *explicit*: 'Explicit S[ir] Pervall[e] De Gales Here endys þe Romance of S[ir] Pevall[e] of Gales Cosyn[e] to king Arthoure'. Above this *explicit* in a box is written 'quod Rob[er]t Thornton'. Unique to this MS.

13. Various charms and prayers in Latin and English (items 22-36); fols 176r-78v

In the right-hand column are two pieces of text, copied in an untidy hand, with no initials to introduce them, though they do feature titles. The texts on fol. 176v revert to single-column format. One modern folio follows these texts, before the commencing of Booklet III.

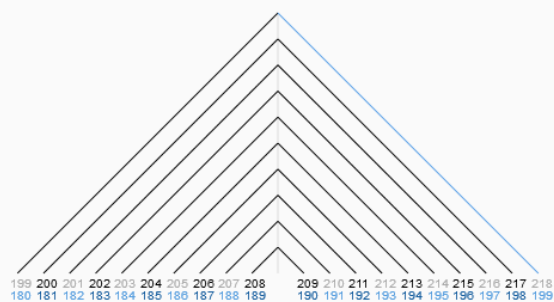
COLLATION: 17 quires totalling at least 355 original folios, the last quire being only a fragment of seven leaves. Losses within the manuscript are substantial, with at least twenty leaves lost. A further twelve have been cancelled: A 24(fols 1-19; wants fols 1, 2, 3, 4, 23); B 24 (fols 20-42; wants fols 1); C 18 (fols 42-52; fols 11-18 cancelled); D 16 (fols 53-68); E 18 (fols 69-86); F 16 (fols 87- 102); G 22 (fols 103-22; wants fols 1, 22); H 22 (fols 123-43; fol. 12 cancelled); I 22 (fols 144-63; wants fols 5, 18); K 16 (fols 164-79); L 20 (fols 180-99); M 24 (fols 200-23); N 20 (fols 224-38; wants fols 1, 2, 17, 18, 19, 20); O 18 (fols 239-55; wants fol. 1); P 30 (fols 256-81; wants fol. 1; fols 10-12 cancelled); Q38 (fols 282-316; wants fols 17, 22, 38); R ? (fragment of seven fols):



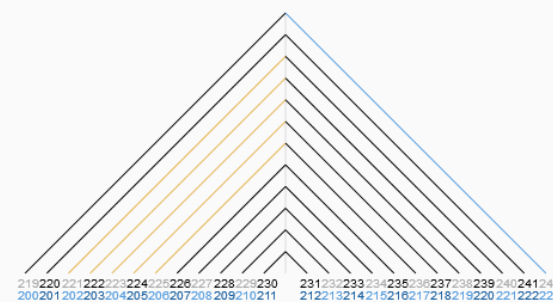
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XI



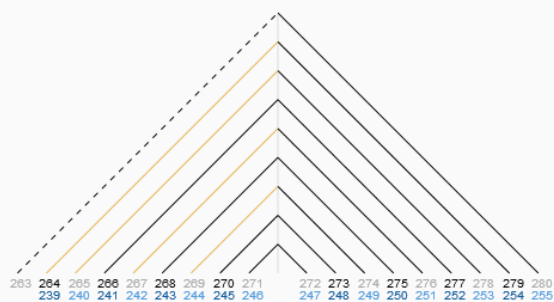
XII



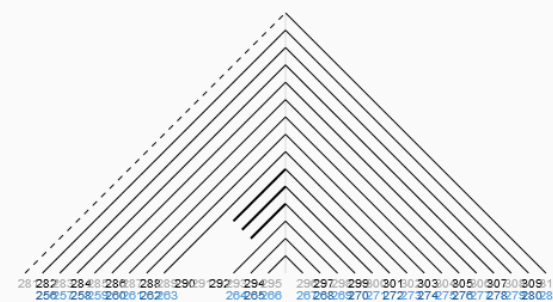
XIII



XIV



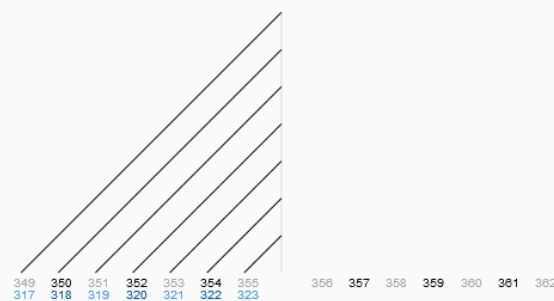
XV



XVI



XVII



APPENDIX D: Princeton, University Library, MS Taylor 9

Princeton Taylor MS 9 (*olim.* Ireland-Blackburn MS) is a codex of two halves, the first contains three romance texts in English, the second contains court records relating to the manor of Hale, Lancashire in Latin. These two halves are written in different hands and were likely bound together in the early-sixteenth century. See Don C. Skemer, *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Princeton University Library*, contributions by Adelaide Bennett, Jean F. Preston, William P. Stoneman, and the Index of Christian Art, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013). The below description refers only to the first half of the manuscript.

DATE: *c.* 1450-75

PLACE OF PRODUCTION: Lancashire

SCRIBE: Unidentified *anglicana* scribe Lancashire; LP: 25, *LALME*

BINDING: early sixteenth century, dark (oak?) wooden boards, extremely damaged, splintered and worm-ridden; leather throngs nailed in on right edge and along the spine with 5 white leather loops. On inside of the binding is a note written by James Augustus Henry Murray (1837-1915), dated July 1876. It summarizes the contents of the codex, provides a collation of 5 quires of 6 sheets each, lists the quire signatures and details damage. A second note written by the same thanks the EETS for letting him borrow the ms. which he is now returning, having confirmed the edition by Robson to be accurate.

MS: Originally 100 folios of parchment, now lacking 2 folios, with 1 modern leaf inserted explaining the loss of the first folio of the poem *Sir Amadace*.

LEAF SIZE: 113 x 64mm

LAYOUT: All three texts appear as one column of text in a relatively large script, with an average of 22 lines to a page. Text is aligned to the left with large margins of 25mm to the right, 10mm from the top and 35mm from the bottom edge.

DECORATION: space is left for 3-line initials, which have not been carried out, though several feature guide letters. Evidence for ruling, script size and placement is consistent.

FOLIATION/PAGINATION: Foliation in pencil in top right-hand margin, modern.

DAMAGE: Very worn, mouldy with some of the text faded so it is now illegible; significant water damage to the bottom and right margin. Some evidence of margins being cut to be repurposed.

ITEMS: ms. contains three romances, all divided into three 'fytes'.

BOOKLET I (folios 1-58)

1. *The Awntyrs off Arthure: DIMEV 2628, Manual 1.I.30; fols 1r-15v*

Text begins without a title, with a 3-line blank initial, very worn. Fol. 6v, halfway down the folio is the word 'a fytt' aligned to the right, with a space of equiv. 2 lines following. Blank space for two-line initial with a guide letter 'h' marks the beginning of the next episode. Similarly, on fol. 11v with guide letter 't' written twice. Several instances of the scribe correcting the text. Fol. 12 bottom margin of folio missing, with no apparent loss to text. This marks the end of the first quire. Text ends on fol. 15v with the word 'ffinis' aligned to the right of the last line. This text has been ruled.

2. *Sir Amadace: DIMEV 5552, Manual 1.I.113; fols 16r-33v*

Sheet of modern paper precedes the opening of *Sir Amadace*, which is lacking the opening of the text. Written by same as the note attached to the beginning of the ms; calculates that 24 lines are lost. Fol. 20r end of 'a ffitte', displayed as above, with blank space following and two-line blank initial with guide letter. Likewise at fol. 26v. At the top of fol. 33v the text ends, with the words 'ffinis de sir Amadace' aligned to the right of the last line, followed by 2-line gap.

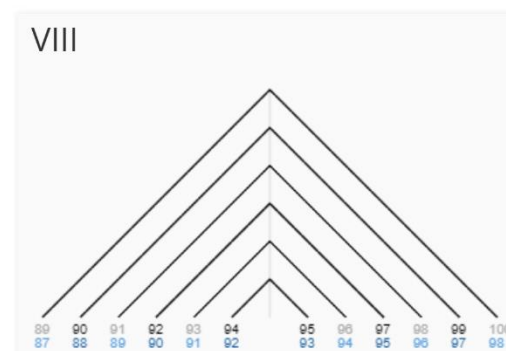
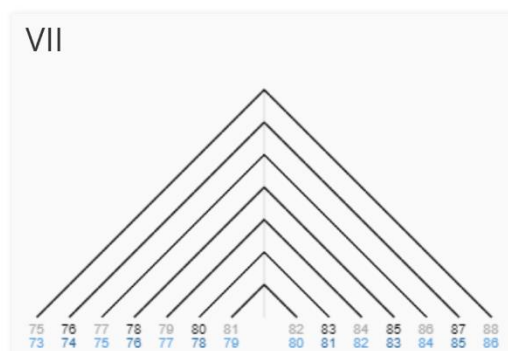
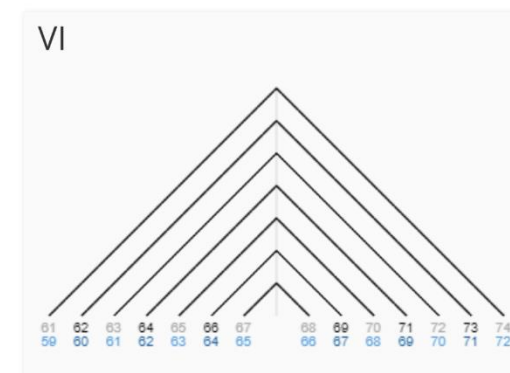
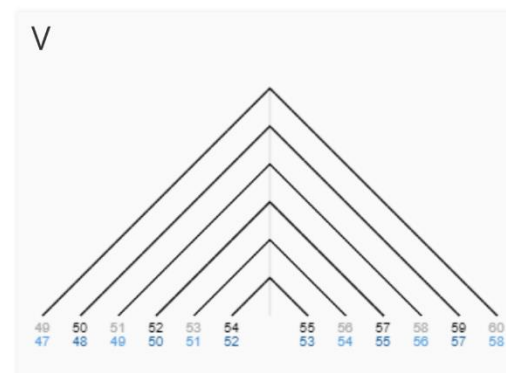
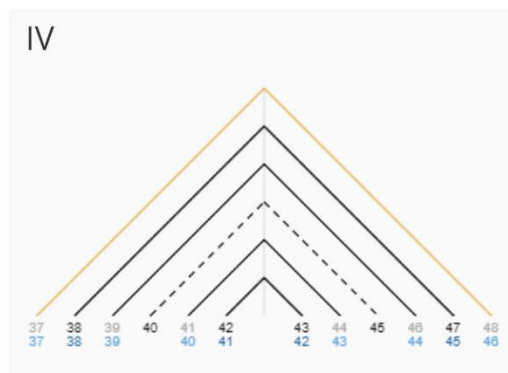
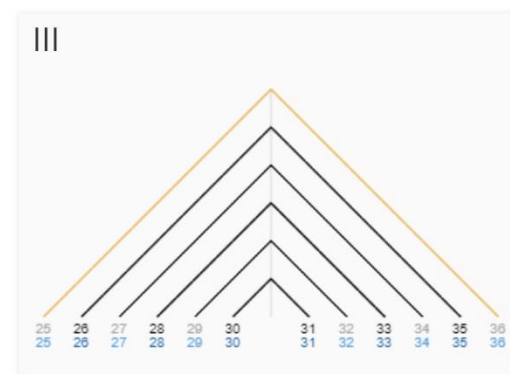
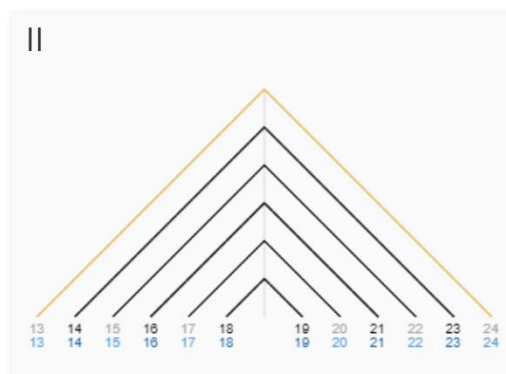
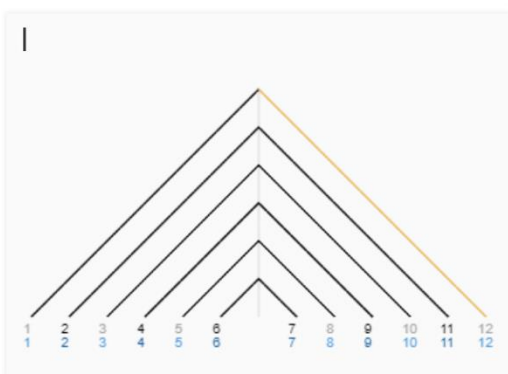
3. *The Avowyng of Arthur: DIMEV 1885, Manual 1.I.32; fols 33v-58r*

Text begins without title, with three-line blank initial and guide letter 'h'. At fol. 43v the words 'primus passus' written, aligned to the right of the text, followed by 2-line gap and blank initial to open next episode. Fol. 49v scribe reverts to writing 'a ffitte'. Text ends halfway down fol. 58r, signed off with 'Amen' written in a different hand. Rest of folio blank.

Fol. 47r bottom margin features two inscriptions in the same early sixteenth-century hand: 'Pme[??] Rychardy-Lathu- Scrypcit hoc' and 'Thomas Yrlond scripcit hoc'.

COLLATION: 8 quires totalling 100 original folios with a loss of two folios: A 12 (folios 1-12); B 12 (folios 13-22; wanting folios 4 and 9); C 12 (folios 23-34); D 12 (folios 35-46); E 12 (folios 47-58); F 14 (folios 59-72); G 14 (folios 73-86); H 12 (folios 87-98).

Written in two hands, both in a mid-fifteenth century *anglicana*.



APPENDIX E: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324 is one of several fragments which at one time formed a collection of booklets, now dismembered. Kathleen Scott has identified ten of these booklets. See Kathleen L. Scott, 'Newly Discovered Booklets from a Reconstructed Middle English Manuscript', *English Manuscript Studies*, 14 (2008), 112-29. The description below relates only to Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324, for a list of the other booklets please see Appendix G.

DATE: c. 1460-80

PLACE OF PRODUCTION: London

SCRIBE: unidentified Scribe A, copying *ad litteram*; text mapped to Derbyshire, LP: 320, *LALME*

BINDING: modern binding 295 x 203mm likely occurred after ms. was acquired by Francis Douce. Several signatures to suggest once formed a larger collection of booklets which were organized by an alphabetized lettering system, written in an eighteenth-century hand. No evidence the booklets were ever bound. Inside front cover: s.c.21898 No.23 Douce MS234

J Baynes Greys Inn 1781

Francis Douce shield and signature

MS: 12 folios of medieval paper; iv-14-ii; watermark of a crown with a crossed rod (untraceable to *Briquet*).¹

LEAF SIZE: 272 x 192mm

WRITING SPACE: 204 x 135mm

LAYOUT: text copied in a single column of uniform large text. 30 lines per page. Pricked and ruled, ruling continues onto blank folio 12r/v.

FOLIATION/PAGINATION: 2 types of pagination, one 18thC hand. One in pencil begins on Francis Douce's note (i) ends on 14. One in ink from fol. 1r to 12.

Quire signatures appear on fols 2r (aii), 3r (aiii) and 10r (bii); above medieval quire signatures are pencil markings: above *a* = '1'; above *b* = 'ii'

Catchword appears on fol. 8v, in red and black ink in a box: *he folowed*; matches on fol.9v.

DECORATION: Red ink at the beginning of lines, rhyme brackets and paragraph markers for new stanza. Blue and red-ink initial to start poem, and on 2 other occasions in text. 1 illustration of little bird detail fol. 1r line 10.

¹ Scott, 'Newly Discovered Booklets', p. 112.

MARGINAL TEXT: fol. 6r top margin, black ink 'Thonson' written in hand contemporary to scribe; fol. 7r written to right of the verse to which it relates 'yf thou be courteou[s] Knyght'.

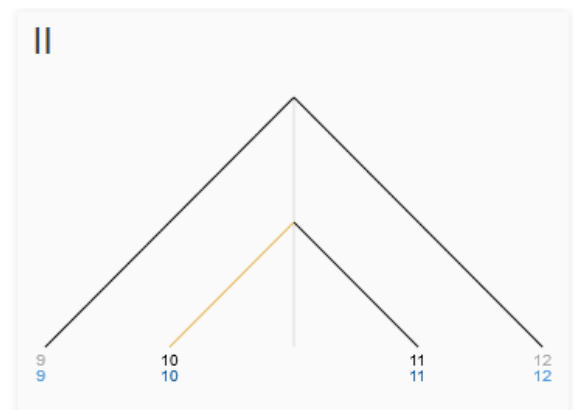
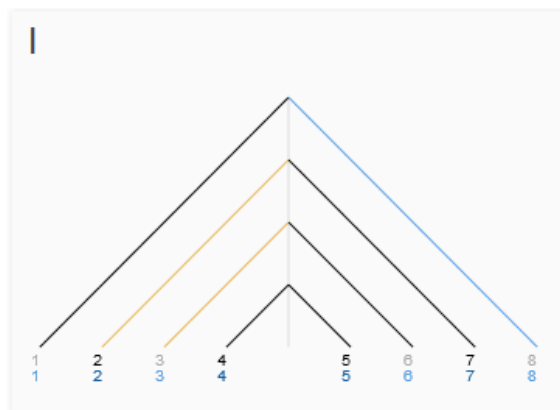
DAMAGE: several of the margins have been trimmed/cut off, as at fols 4r, 7-9r, 11r, and 12r is a stub, bottom half cut away, no damage to text. Otherwise ms survives well.

ITEMS:

1. *The Awntyrs of Arthure: DIMEV 2628*; fols 1r-11v

Text opens with 5-line blue-ink initial with red ink flourishing. Stanza form is represented with nine long and three short lines, the fourth short line aligned to the right of the other three. The rhyming of the wheel visually presented through the use of two sets of rhyme brackets in red ink. A red-ink bird and bracket appears next to the wheel of the first stanza. Fol. 6r a two-line initial marks a divide in the text in the same style as the opening initial, likewise at fol. 8v. Text ends with no explicit.

COLLATION: 2 quires totalling 12 folios: A 8 (folios 1-8); B 4 (folios 9-12):



APPENDIX F: Summary of Documents

The National Archives, Kew, London

Court of Chancery: Six Clerks Office: Early Proceedings, Richard II to Philip and Mary, c. 1386-1558:

C 1/15/274	Thomas Bernard VS. John Crane, of Barnet, and John Aleyn, brewer of London
1443-50, or 1455-6	Bond for safekeeping of Robert Frodesham, priest. London
C 1/22/13	Thomas Wale, draper of London and his wife, late the wife of Thomas Johnson, draper VS. Robert Osbern, esq., and Robert Rokke, clerk
1452-4, or 1493-1500	Messuage and land in Barking (Berkyng), bought by the said Thomas Johnson, Essex.
C 1/54/133	Agnes Barnard, widow VS. Richard Fanne and John Gray, feoffees to uses
1475-80, or 1483-5	Messuage in Thaksted, Essex
C 1/54/167	Edmond Payne, executor of John Hawekyn VS. Richard Fanne and John Gray
1475-80, or 1483-5	Messuage in Thaksted, sold to Hawekyn by Agnes Barnard, widow. Essex
C 1/82/91	John Wynnesbury, citizen and draper of London and Margaret, his wife, daughter and heir of Thomas Johnson, citizen and draper of London VS. Michel Wynchecombe and William Sibson
1486	Messuage and land in Barking, Essex.

Court of Chancery: Six Clerks Office: Pleadings, Series I, Elizabeth I to Charles I, c. 1558-1660:

C 2/Eliz/P3/55	George Patshall, infant son of Walter Patshall (d.) & Richard and Elizabeth Wyman, widow of Walter Patshall (d.) VS. William Patshall
1558-1603	Lands Dambury, Little Baddow, Thaxted, Wimbish, Essex. Once the estate of Thomas Patshall (d.)
C 2/Eliz/W10/61	Richard Wenman and Elizabeth Wenman his wife, VS. Richard Patsall
1558-1603	Relplication and rejoinder. Touching the will of Walter Patsall, former husband of the plaintiff, Elizabeth Wenman, re: lease of the Cricklade parsonage, Wiltshire

Chancery and Supreme Court of Judicature, Chancery Division: Six Clerks Office and successors: Decree Rolls, 1534-1903:

C 78/27/1	Thomas Patsall, gent. VS. William Pascall, gent.
1563 1 May	2 messuages, 330 acres, 40s rents in South Hanningfield, Ramsden and Stock, Essex, claimed through an entail: dismissal.
C 78/3/14	John and Alice Miche VS. Thomas Patsall & Edward Solme
1545 24 Nov	Land in Springfield Essex

Chancery: Certificates of Statute Merchant and Statute Staple, 1284-1639:

C 241/232/14	Debtor: James Berkeley, lord of Berkeley, knight (of Glos.) VS. Creditor: Thomas Barnard, citizen and merchant of London.
1446 Feb 12	Debt of £300 taken before William Estfield, Mayor of the Staple of Westminster

Records of the Court of Requests, c. 1492-1642:

REQ 2/14/156	Thomas Patsall VS. John Alleyn
1522; 1547-1553	Land in Debden, Essex

Records of the Chancellor and Council of the Duchy of Lancaster, c. 1000-1953:

DL 25/1245/985 Document Sealed at Great Waltham, Essex
 1467 Feb 28 Document mentions Robert Kelling (Killyng), rector of Mashbury; Thomas Cranfrod (Craneford), of Wethersfield, formerly of Great Baddow; Thomas son of John Eve, wheeler of Heyford; Thomas Bernard of Barnston.

Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, c. 1383-1900:

PROB 11/22/445 Will of Walter Pateshale of Thaxted, Essex
 3 December 1527 fols 202v-203v

Records of London's Livery Companies Online, c. 1400-1900

Accessed Online: <<http://www.londonroll.org/>>

1466 Entry: Walter Patsill, New Freeman, Co Mercer
 Jeffrey Boleyne, Master

1490 Entry: John Keme, New Apprentice and New Freeman
 Robert Grene, Master and Co Mercer

APPENDIX G: Related Manuscripts

Manuscripts Related by Scribe

HM 114 Scribe, junior clerk (?)

London, British Library

MS Harley 3943 (part 1)

1. Geoffrey Chaucer *Troilus and Criseyde*

San Marino, Huntington Library, California

MS HM 114

1. William Langland *Piers Plowman*; fols 1r-130v
2. *Mandeville's Travels*; fols 131r-84v
3. Alliterative *Susanna*; fols 184v-90v
4. Excerpt of *The Three Kings of Cologne*; fols 190v-92v
5. Geoffrey Chaucer *Troilus and Criseyde*; fols 193r-318v
6. Middle English translation of Peter Ceffons *Epistola Luciferi and Geros*; fols 319r-25v

Robert Thornton

London, British Library

MS Additional 31042 (London Thornton MS)

1. *Cursor Mundi*; fols 3r-32r
2. *Dialogue between Christ and Man*; fols 32r-32v
3. *Northern Passion*; fols 33r-50r
4. *Siege of Jerusalem*; fols 50r-66r
5. *Sege of Melayne*; fols 66v-79v
6. Hymn to the Virgin Mary; fols 80r-81v
7. *Duke Rowlande and Sir Ottuell of Spayne*; fols 82r-94v
8. 'Complaint that Crist maketh of his Passioun'; fol. 94r
9. A Christmas Carol; fol. 94v
10. Song of the Passion; fols 94v-96v
11. John Lydgate, *Verses on the Kings of England*; fols 96r-96v
12. John Lydgate, *Dietary*; fols 97r-97v
13. Lyric 'This werlde is tournede vp-so downe'; fol. 97v
14. *The Quatrefoil of Love*; fols 98r-101v
15. A prayer to the guardian angel; fol. 101v
16. Alliterating paraphrase of Vulgate Psalm 50; fols 102r-02v

17. *Virtues of the Mass*; fols 103r-110v
18. 'The Rose of Ryse'; fol. 110v
19. *The Three Kings of Cologne*; fols 111r-19v
20. 'The Proverbis of Salamon'; fols 120r-22r
21. Dialogue between a sinner and Mercy; fols 122v-23r
22. 'Do Merci before thi Judement'; fols 123r-23v
23. 'Mercy Passes all Things'; fols 123v-24v
24. *Richard Coer de Lion*; fols 125r-13v
25. 'The Apocryphal History of the Infancy'; fols 163v-68v
26. *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*; fols 169r-76v
27. *Wynnere and Wastoure*; fols 176v-81v

Scribe A (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324 collection.)

London, British Library

MS Sloane 3488

1. 'Hawking' Prince Edward's Book of Hunting; fols 1r-4v

MS Sloane 3489

1. Friar Randolf *Treteese of Physik*, fols 1r-5v
2. *Aqua Vite*, fols 7r-10v
3. *Agnus Castus*; fols 13r-29v
4. 'Brother I pray', fols. 30r-44v
5. Pestilence Treatise, fols 45r-52v

Oxford, Bodleian Library

MS Rawlinson D.82

1. *The Siege of Thebes*; fols 1r-10v
2. *The Siege of Troy*; fols 11r-24v
3. John Gower 'The Court of Venus' *Confessio Amantis*; fols 25r-33v

MS Rawlinson Poet 35

1. Benedict Burgh *Distichs of Cato*; fols 1r-17r
2. John Lydgate *Dietary*; fols 17v-18v

MS Rawlinson Poet 143

1. Boke of St Albans; fols 1r-20v

MS Rawlinson Poet 168

1. Thomas Hoccleve *Regiment of Princes*; fols 1r-110v

Manuscripts Related by Codex**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 324 collection.**

London, British Library, MS Additional 34764 (Scribe B)

1. 'Albion Chronicle'; fols 1r-10v

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D.99 (Scribe B)

1. Mandeville's *Travels*; fols 1r-62v

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D.913 (Scribe C)

1. *Manuale Curatorum*; fols 10r-21v

Manuscripts Related by Text

This is not an exhaustive list, focusing principally on romance texts which survive in multiple manuscripts, sharing a witness with one of the four codices of the *Awntyrs* or one of its related MSS. It further details the extant MSS of the *Awntyrs* source text, *The Trentale of St Gregory*.

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales

MS Brogyntyn 2.1

- *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle*: DIMEV 3110, Manual 1.I.28

MS Peniarth 394

- *Trentale of St Gregory* (I): DIMEV 134, Manual 9.XXIV.209

MS Porkington 20

- *Trentale of St Gregory* (III): DIMEV 4979, Manual 9.XXIV.209

Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Library

MS 225

- *Sir Eglamour of Artois*: DIMEV 2867, Manual 1.I.79

Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College Library

MS 107/176

- *Guy of Warwick* (1): DIMEV 4907, Manual 1.I.7

MS 174/95

- *Robert of Cisyle*: DIMEV 4415, Manual 1.I.115

MS 175/96

- *Richard Coer de Lion*: DIMEV 3231, Manual 1.I.106
- *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*: DIMEV 3250, Manual 1.I.6

- *Sir Isumbras: DIMEV 1934, Manual 1.I.78*

Cambridge, Trinity College Library

MS O.2.13 (1117)

- *Sir Beues of Hamtoun: DIMEV 3250, Manual 1.I.6*

Cambridge, University Library

MS Ff.1.6 (Findern Manuscript)

- *Sir Degrevant: DIMEV 3197, Manual 1.I.97*

MS Ff.2.38

- *Earl of Toulouse: DIMEV 2813, Manual 1.I.94*
- *Octavian: DIMEV 3132, Manual 1.I.81*
- *Robert of Cisyle: DIMEV 4415, Manual 1.I.115*
- *Sir Beues of Hamtoun: DIMEV 3250, Manual 1.I.6*
- *Sir Degare: DIMEV 3116, Manual 1.I.92*
- *Sir Eglamour of Artois: DIMEV 2867, Manual 1.I.79*
- *Syr Tryamowre: DIMEV 1924, Manual 1.I.82*

MS Ff.5.48

- *Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy: DIMEV 620, Manual 5.XIII.290*

MS Gg.IV.27.2

- *Floris and Blaunchfleur: DIMEV 3686, Manual 1.I.96*

MS Ii.4.9

- *Robert of Cisyle: DIMEV 4415, Manual 1.I.115*

MS Kk.1.6

- *Trentale of St Gregory (III): DIMEV 4979, Manual 9.XXIV.209*

MS Mm.5.14

- *Siege of Jerusalem: DIMEV 2651, Manual 1.I.107*

Canterbury, Cathedral Library

MS Additional 46

- *Trentale of St Gregory (I): DIMEV 2777, Manual 9.XXIV.209*

Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland

MS Advocates 19.2.1 (Auchinleck)

- *Amys and Amiloun: DIMEV 1350, Manual 1.I.112*
- *Arthour and Merlin: DIMEV 2807, Manual 1.I.18*
- *Floris and Blaunchfleur: DIMEV 3686, Manual 1.I.96*

- *Guy of Warwick* (1): DIMEV 4907, Manual 1.I.7
- *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*: DIMEV 3250, Manual 1.I.6
- *Sir Degare*: DIMEV 3116, Manual 1.I.92

MS Advocates 19.3.1 (Heege MS)

- *Sir Amadace*: DIMEV 5552, Manual 1.I.113
- *Sir Isumbras*: DIMEV 1934, Manual 1.I.78
- *Trentale of St Gregory* (III): DIMEV 4979, Manual 9.XXIV.209

Exeter, Devon Record Office

MS 2507

- *Siege of Jerusalem*: DIMEV 2651, Manual 1.I.107

London, British Library

MS Additional 22283

- Alliterative *Susanna*: DIMEV 5607, Manual 2.IV.26
- *Robert of Cisyle*: DIMEV 4415, Manual 1.I.115

MS Additional 27879

- *Arthour and Merlin* (Couplet Version): DIMEV 1886, Manual 1.I.18
- *Sir Degare*: DIMEV 3116, Manual 1.I.92
- *Sir Eglamour of Artois*: DIMEV 2867, NIMEV 1725, Manual 1.I.79
- *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle*: DIMEV 3110, Manual 1.I.28
- *Syr Tryamowre*: DIMEV 1924, Manual 1.I.82

MS Additional 34801

- *Robert of Cisyle*: DIMEV 4415, Manual 1.I.115

MS Cotton Caligula A.II

- Alliterative *Susanna*: DIMEV 5607, Manual 2.IV.26
- *Siege of Jerusalem*: DIMEV 2651, Manual 1.I.107
- *Sir Eglamour of Artois*: DIMEV 2867, Manual 1.I.79
- *Sir Isumbras*: DIMEV 1934, Manual 1.I.78
- *Trentale of St Gregory* (I): DIMEV 134, Manual 9.XXIV.209

MS Cotton Vespasian E.XVI

- *Siege of Jerusalem*: DIMEV 2651, Manual 1.I.107

MS Cotton Vitellius D.III

- *Floris and Blaunchfleur*: DIMEV 3686, Manual 1.I.96

MS Egerton 2862

- *Amys and Amiloun*: DIMEV 1350, Manual 1.I.112

- *Floris and Blanchfleur: DIMEV 3686, Manual 1.I.96*
- *Sir Degare: DIMEV 3116, Manual 1.I.92*
- *Sir Eglamour of Artois: DIMEV 2867, Manual 1.I.79*

MS Harley 525

- *Robert of Cisyle: DIMEV 4415, Manual 1.I.115*

MS Harley 1701

- *Robert of Cisyle: DIMEV 4415, Manual 1.I.115*

MS Harley 2386

- *Amys and Amiloun: DIMEV 1350, Manual 1.I.112*

MS Harley 3810

- *Trentale of St Gregory (III): DIMEV 4979, Manual 9.XXIV.209*

MS Harley 6223

- *Arthour and Merlin (Couplet Version): DIMEV 1886, Manual 1.I.18*

MS Sloane 1044

- *Guy of Warwick (1): DIMEV 4907, Manual 1.I.7*

London, Grays Inn

MS 20

- *Sir Isumbras: DIMEV 1934, Manual 1.I.78*

London, Lambeth Palace

MS 306

- *Trentale of St Gregory (II): DIMEV 2777, Manual 9.XXIV.209*

Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli

MS XIII.B.29

- *Sir Beues of Hamtoun: DIMEV 3250, Manual 1.I.6*
- *Sir Isumbras: DIMEV 1934, Manual 1.I.78*

Oxford, Balliol College Library

MS 354

- *Trentale of St Gregory (I): DIMEV 2777, Manual 9.XXIV.209*

Oxford, Bodleian Library

MS Ashmole 45 (part 1)

- *Earl of Toulouse: DIMEV 2813, Manual 1.I.94*

MS Ashmole 61

- *Earl of Toulouse: DIMEV 2813, Manual 1.I.94*
- *Sir Isumbras: DIMEV 1934, Manual 1.I.78*

MS Douce 124

- *Arthour and Merlin: DIMEV 2807, Manual 1.I.18*

MS Douce 236

- *Arthour and Merlin (Couplet Version): DIMEV 1886, Manual 1.I.18*

MS Douce 261

- *Sir Degare: DIMEV 3116, Manual 1.I.92*
- *Sir Eglamour of Artois: DIMEV 2867, Manual 1.I.79*
- *Sir Isumbras: DIMEV 1934, Manual 1.I.78*

MS Douce 326

- *Amys and Amiloun: DIMEV 1350, Manual 1.I.112*

MS Eng. Poet A.1

- *Alliterative Susanna: DIMEV 5607, Manual 2.IV.26*
- *Robert of Cisyle: DIMEV 4415, Manual 1.I.115*
- *Trentale of St Gregory (I): DIMEV 2777, Manual 9.XXIV.209*

MS Laud misc. 656

- *Siege of Jerusalem: DIMEV 2651, Manual 1.I.107*

MS Rawlinson Poet 34

- *Sir Degare: DIMEV 3116, Manual 1.I.92*

MS Rawlinson Poet 139

- 'Hawking' Prince Edward's Book of Hunting

Oxford, Trinity College Library

MS 57

- *Robert of Cisyle: DIMEV 4415, Manual 1.I.115*

Oxford, University College Library

MS 142

- *Sir Isumbras: DIMEV 1934, Manual 1.I.78*

Princeton, University Library

MS Garrett 143

- *Trentale of St Gregory (I): DIMEV 2777, Manual 9.XXIV.209*

MS Taylor Medieval 11

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